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January 30, 2023

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A NOVEL
LOYALTY
"Powerful, poignant... unputdownable."
—KRISTIN HANNAH
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—STEPHANIE DRAY, author of *The Women of Chateau Lafayette*

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—MEG WAITE CLAYTON, author of *The Postmistress of Paris*

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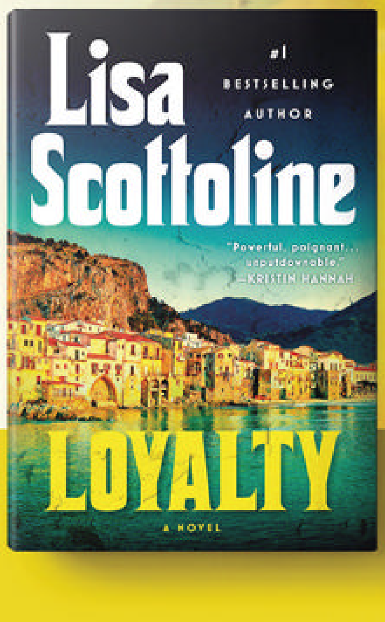
—JENNIFER ROSNER, author of *Once We Were Home*

“Tautly plotted, brimming with detail . . . Scottoline fills her tale with a richly varied cast, gathering them into a web of intrigue as the book races toward its heart-stopping finish. A delight!”
—HELENE WECKER, author of *The Hidden Palace*



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Catherine Lacey

The Guggenheim fellow follows up *Pew* with the ambitious and audacious *Biography of X*. See our review on p. 38.

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Volume 270
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Cover: Willy Somma

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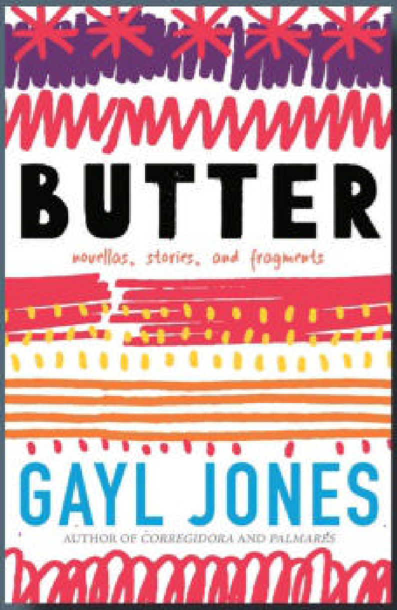
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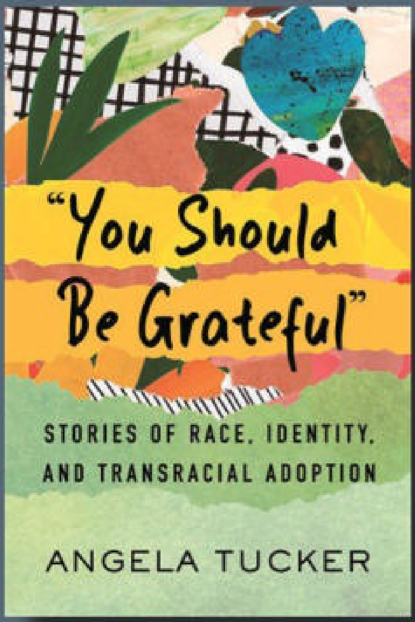
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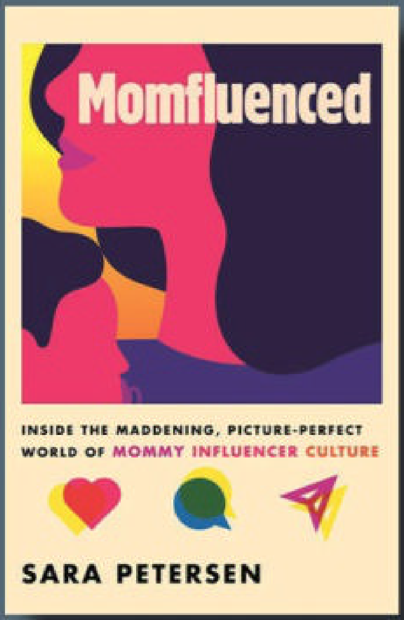
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SARA PETERSEN

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-Amanda Montell, author of *Cultish*

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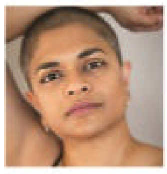

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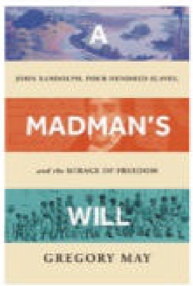
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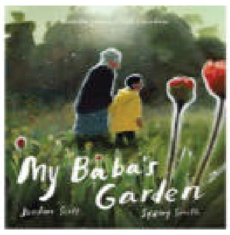
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Philippians
LETTERS OF PAUL
Timeline
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PHILIPPIANS 1–2
Study

1:1-2 Paul introduces his letter by listing the names of the senders and recipients of the letter, then giving an invocation of grace and peace.

1:1 Timothy was one of Paul's most trusted co-workers and messengers. He is listed as co-sender, as he is for five other letters (2 Cor, Col, 1 Thes, 2 Thes, Phlm). • **slaves of Christ Jesus:** As those who belong entirely to Christ, they were completely devoted to his service (see Phil 2:20-21). • **God's holy people** have

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The Week in **Publishing**

HARPER COLLINS ON
PASSION DOESN'T $ PAY $ the BILLS

HarperCollins and the HC union agreed to employ an independent mediator as a way to move their stalled negotiations forward. Some 240 union employees have been on strike since November 10.

Krump

Williams

William Morrow's Emily Krump and Jessica Williams have each been promoted to v-p and editorial director for William Morrow Fiction, while Mauro DiPreta has been promoted to senior v-p and editorial director for William Morrow Nonfiction.

Julia Reidhead, chairman and president of W.W. Norton & Company, was elected chair of the Association of American Publishers for the 2023–2024 term.

Page Street Publishing is launching Page Street YA this spring, an imprint dedicated to the company's growing teen readership. Under the brand, Page Street expects to double the number of annual YA releases to 24 titles by 2024.

PAGE STREET YA

Chuck Morrell, a longtime book sales representative, died on January 17 in Newport Beach, Calif. He was 88. Morrell's 60-year career included long stints as a publisher's rep at Doubleday and St. Martin's Press, as well as selling multiple commission lines.

Online & On-Air

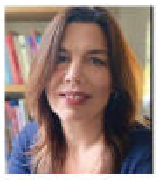
More to Come

Calvin Reid interviews Robert Kirkman, creator of *The Walking Dead* and the diverse, imaginative universe of Invincible, which turns 20 this year.
publishersweekly.com/kirkman

Week Ahead

Former president Donald Trump is threatening to sue Simon & Schuster over a forthcoming book... again. Andrew Albanese explains.
publishersweekly.com/people-vs-trump

Children's Bookshelf



This June, Astra Books for Young Readers' MineditionUS imprint, headed by Maria Russo, will receive a new name: Minerva.
publishersweekly.com/minerva

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Editor at Large Louisa Ermelino
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Heading into the Unknown

In a recent presentation, NPD BookScan said 2023 will be marked by changes as companies continue to adapt to the postpandemic world

Kristen McLean, industry analyst for U.S. books at the NPD Group, predicted in a webinar last week that 2023 will be a year of transition for the publishing industry. McLean noted that even with unit sales of print books down 6% in 2022 from 2021, sales last year were the second-highest in BookScan's more than 20-year history. But she warned that sales are likely to be down for at least the first half of this year, as both publishing and the overall economy continue to adjust to changes caused by the pandemic.

Kristen McLean

McLean sees 2023 as a year when publishers will look to balance the need for stability with the need for innovation. She expects publishers to have conservative approaches to acquiring new content as they determine where new growth opportunities are and what readers want.

As for retailers, many are rethinking the ways they want to buy in 2023 in terms of ordering processes, what they want to carry, and how they want it priced, McLean said. Both publishers and retailers—including bookstores and mass merchandisers—will lean on "sure bets" as they wait for a clearer picture of what consumers want, she added. She also predicted that publishers will make some layoffs as they work to improve their returns on investment in the face of higher costs. A reduction in page-to-screen projects as the streaming services cut back on production will lower demand for publishers' content and reduce the opportunities to tie-in titles to new shows, she noted.

One way publishers can adapt to an evolving market is to be aware of the changes in consumer behavior, McLean said. Gen Z (ages 12–26), and to a lesser extent millennials (ages 27–42), are now important book consumers. She believes that BookTok and TikTok are not fads and will continue to drive sales for some time, resulting in significant changes in the market. BookScan follows a group of about 100 authors who use BookTok, and McLean reported that they collectively had a sales gain of 60% last year, following a 40% increase in 2021 over 2020.

In another example of how BookTok is impacting the market, she pointed to changes in sales of romance books between 2018 and 2022. Unit sales rose from 18.5 million in 2018 to 36.1 million last year, and the top sellers are now Colleen Hoover, Emily Henry, and other newcomers, rather than Debbie Macomber, Nora Roberts, and Nicholas Sparks. McLean added that in 2022, Hoover's sales of 14.3 million copies were more than the total sales of books from a number of well-known bestselling authors combined. And she said sales are not just driven by posts with the BookTok hashtag, pointing to the boost James Clear's *Atomic Habits* has received from TikTok.

In a final note on BookTok demographics, McLean said that in a study NPD did for a client, 80% of those using the BookTok hashtag were under age 35. There is a new generation of readers emerging, she declared.

Despite the success BookTok has had in spurring sales, publishing is still grappling with ways to find readers for frontlist titles. Frontlist's share of sales fell from 32% in 2021 to 30% last year. McLean noted that the decline was a surprise to her since she'd assumed that the reopening of physical stores—where the discovery of new titles often takes place—would lead to an improvement in frontlist sales over 2021. Sluggish frontlist sales is an "existential" question, she added, that publishers will be confronting once again this year.

McLean said one reason sales in the juvenile market fell last year is that the shutdown of bookstores, libraries, and book fairs in the early days of the pandemic led to a deep disruption in the discovery process. "The chain of peer-to-peer discovery has been broken," she added, noting that core series that typically sell in big numbers aren't doing as well as in past years, as kids "kind of forgot about them." Observing that children's is one of the markets most challenged by frontlist issues, she thinks a full recovery there is a year away. One of the strongest categories in the juvenile segment was

LGBTQ titles, where sales rose 35.8%—an increase McLean attributed, in part, to the culture wars.

McLean expects the romance category to do well again this year, and said that some other categories that have momentum heading in to 2023 include manga, young adult fiction on social themes, YA graphic novels, and horror. Drilling down a little more, areas that NPD is bullish on include humor, mental health, pets, and books for next-generation moms.

Though the industry will be going through a period of adjustment in 2023, McLean said she is confident there will be a sales rebound "on the other side."

—Jim Milliot

The Publishing World According to Stephen Rubin

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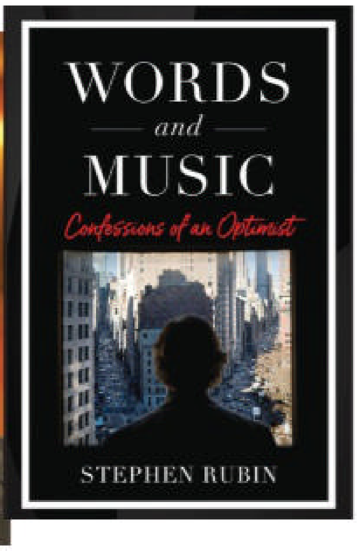
Stephen Rubin



In a new memoir, Steve Rubin, the well-connected publishing executive who started at Bantam Books and spent a large part of his career at Random House before moving to Macmillan, provides a top-down look at the industry. It is a view that filmmakers would likely gravitate to if they wanted to depict the glamorous side of publishing—working with famous authors and celebrities, all while earning a hefty salary. This behind-the-scenes look is combined with an unexpected no-holds-barred critique of some of publishing's best-known executives, as well as firsthand accounts of various corporate machinations. Publishing insiders will, in turn, be intrigued by Rubin's account of some of the industry's biggest deals, and shocked by his frank appraisals of some of its major players.

In *Words and Music*, out from Rowman & Littlefield's Applause imprint, Rubin recounts being hired in 1984 by Jack Romanos as an executive editor at Bantam for an annual salary of $55,000, then nine months later getting promoted to editor-in-chief following Romanos's departure to Simon & Schuster. At Bantam, Rubin worked with numerous publishing heavyweights, among them Stuart and Irwyn Applebaum, Linda Grey, Jack Hoeft, and Alberto Vitale. Not long after landing at Bantam, he acquired paperback rights to Pat Conroy's *The Prince of Tides*, which, after a legendary presentation by the author at the American Booksellers Association convention, went on to become a huge hit, cementing Conroy's reputation as a writer and marking the beginning a 30-year partnership with Rubin.

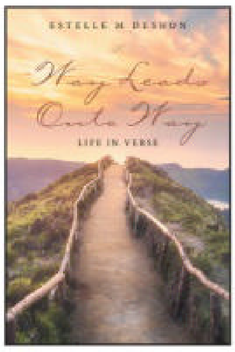
In 1990, Bertelsmann recruited Rubin to turn around Doubleday, which had been foundering since the German conglomerate bought it in 1986. The company had been wildly overspending, publishing 465 titles per year, and, among other perks, giving authors their own American Express cards. It was something Rubin quickly put an end to. He cut the Doubleday list to 200 titles and focused the publisher on a limited number of categories while downsizing the staff "in the most humane fashion with rich financial packages."

The shot in the arm the company needed came when Ann Godoff left her position as Doubleday's executive editor after less than a month on the job, and Rubin named David Gernert to replace her. Gernert had recently signed John Grisham, a new author whose novel *The Firm* was published by Doubleday in March 1991. It was the first in a series of blockbuster titles by Grisham that Doubleday would release.

With Doubleday on the mend, Peter Olson, who was at that point, according to Rubin, angling to replace Jack Hoeft as CEO of Bantam Doubleday Dell, convinced Rubin to move to London as chairman of Transworld and Bantam Doubleday Dell International. Among his instructions was to buy a U.K. publisher. In addition to a nice salary, Rubin was given a spacious flat, a chauffeured car, and 12 first-class round-trip tickets back to New York.

After several generally unsatisfying years—Transworld never did buy a U.K. house, though Rubin did host Mikhail Gorbachev when he was in London to promote his memoir—Rubin returned to New York in what started out as another

You won't want to miss a word.



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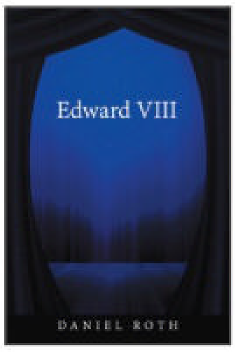

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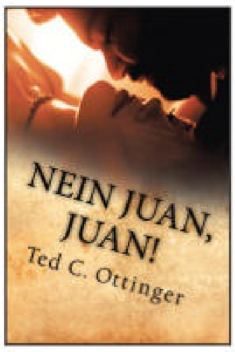

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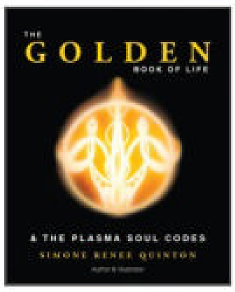

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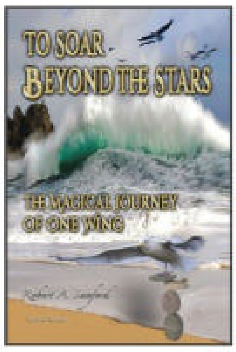

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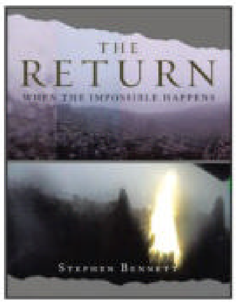

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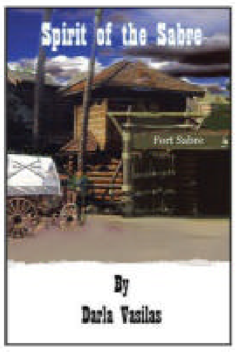

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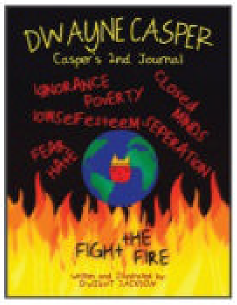

Dwayne Casper

Casper's 2nd Journal

Dwight Jackson

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effort to boost Doubleday. The job took a turn in 1998 when Bertelsmann bought Random House, which would lead to what Rubin called "the greatest professional betrayal of my career." Post-merger, the decision was made by Olson to combine Doubleday's Anchor Books with Knopf's Vintage Books, with the new unit to be overseen by Knopf head Sonny Mehta.

The Anchor debacle notwithstanding, Rubin had plenty of triumphs at Doubleday—none more important than his decision to green-light the publication of *The Da Vinci Code* by then-unknown author Dan Brown. The runway bestseller helped Rubin earn a $1 million bonus one year. (It also, according to Rubin, earned Romanos an "extraordinary" bonus thanks to the success of Brown's earlier book, *Angels and Demons*, which Pocket published.)

Rubin's ties to Random House ended when new CEO Markus Dohle combined Doubleday with Knopf and appointed Mehta to head it. For a short period, Rubin served as publisher-at-large, but he left that role, convinced that the merger of Doubleday and Knopf didn't make publishing sense and bemoaning the fact that some earlier consolidations made by Bertelsmann, in particular combining Bantam and Dell, were bad for the industry.

After leaving the "cesspool" that was RH, Rubin says he was financially set for life, thanks in part to a "bountiful, contractual one-time payment" he received from his former employer. He soon ended up working for John Sargent at Macmillan, who wanted him to revive the struggling Henry Holt, which was losing, Rubin writes, $5 million on revenue of $30 million in 2008. Shortly after joining Holt, following a dinner in his Westhampton home with Bill O'Reilly, Rubin paid $6 million for *Killing Lincoln*, the first title in O'Reilly's immensely popular Killing series. The series was so successful that Holt began paying O'Reilly eight-figure advances, because "all of us were making unheard of amounts of money."

The downside came when Fox fired O'Reilly over a series of sexual harassment charges. Holt continued to publish the series, but as sales plunged, Rubin convinced O'Reilly to redo the original deal. Still, Holt had to take a huge write-off and "people had to forgo their bonuses."

The election of Donald Trump as president led to another huge success for Holt, and to what Rubin called "probably the wildest experience of my career": the publication of Michael Wolff's *Fire and Fury*, the first book critical of Trump's presidency. A threat by Trump to sue over the release of the book ensured that *Fire and Fury* would be a bestseller. In his memoir, Rubin commends Sargent, Macmillan president Don Weisberg, and owner Stefan von Holtzbrinck for standing up to Trump's threats, and in doing so proving that a book can still spark a nationwide debate on important issues.

Despite a good run at Holt, Rubin's tenure ended on something of a sour note. The hiring of Ben Schrank to succeed him as president and publisher in 2019 (with Rubin becoming chairman of Holt) turned into a short-lived fiasco, and Rubin never saw eye to eye with Schrank's successor, Amy Einhorn, who had been picked by Weisberg. An effort to find a new role for Rubin at Macmillan came up short, and he moved on to a consulting publisher role at Simon & Schuster.

Why was Sargent fired?

If Rubin knows why John Sargent was fired as Macmillan CEO by Stefan von Holtzbrinck in fall 2020, he didn't put it in the final edition of the book (though he did offer up a reason in a galley). All Rubin says is that whatever precipitated the firing is now "off the table" and called von Holtzbrinck's action "the dumbest move in recent publishing history."

—Jim Milliot

Rose Books to Bloom This Summer

Author Chelsea Hodson has always been drawn to the fringes of publishing. Early in her career as a writer, she found that her favorite books were "weirder, riskier books than ones I might find at a more mainstream publishing house," she said. Now, she's staking a claim for herself on those fringes: this year, Hodson will launch her own indie press, Rose Books.

Hodson is best known for her essay collection *Tonight I'm Someone Else*, published by Holt in 2018. Before moving to Sedona, Ariz., in 2021, she'd been a fixture of the New York City literary scene for nearly a decade. It was there that she got her start in the world of small presses. Her first chapbook, *Pity the Animal*, was published by Kevin Sampsell at Future Tense Books in 2014. "Though only 500 copies were printed," she said, "it

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SERMONS WITH INSIGHT

by ROLAND ZIMANY, PH.D.

The sermons in his book, Sermons with Insight, were preached during the time when Pastor Zimany was a Lutheran minister. The sermons present religious language as metaphorical. Sermons include efforts to get a congregation active in certain areas. However, his primary criterion for inclusion was to offer understandings and approaches that the fundamentalists and others do not take. Some of the sermons provide examples of how and what Jesus says literally can apply to us figuratively. For example, "bear fruit" means "do good deeds." Some of them deal with what it means to be saved and how we can change, finding transformative power, sometimes through self-sacrifice, and being born again, perhaps after singing "I surrender all." Other sermons point out the value for us of Jesus' presence on earth, by which he made the love of God real and near, demonstrating the value of believing in God especially among those who needed love most, people whom no one else cared about, namely, outcasts, sinners, and scoundrels, giving them a sense of acceptance and self-worth and thereby expressing what God is like, how God acts, and what God is concerned about.

When we come across passages in the Bible that don't seem to make complete common sense, the best thing to do is to ask what spiritual truth the passage might be teaching or symbolizing. The sermons do that. They give suggestions on how and when to follow rules. In the presence of chaos, rules can be a source of salvation, because rules can provide order and direction, so that we can know where we stand.

The sermons depict Jesus as the imprint of God's being. That means that Jesus' behavior shows exactly the way God wants us to behave. His teachings are the same as God's teachings, which provides at least a partial explanation of the phrase "Son of God," which is a metaphor, which takes two words that normally don't go together and puts them together, so that we "see" things differently. The sermons also explain the ancient understanding of words that are important in the Bible.

One of the sermons offers an explanation of the Trinity. The sermon begins: "It's all Jesus' fault. If he hadn't taught and behaved in such an outstanding way, after he was gone and his followers asked, 'Who was that masked man, anyway?' and their answer was, 'Why, he was actually God in the flesh!' -- if that hadn't happened, the doctrine of the Trinity would not have been developed." Another sermon offers proof of the existence of God. Others show the value of noticing what something is not saying, providing interpretations of phrases that Jesus used. And they present positive views of the Ten Commandments.

Literal accounts in the Bible show that Scripture was written years after the actual events, while still applying to us today. One minor example is that, in his day, Jesus was called "Master," or "Rabbi," or "Rabboni." He wasn't called "Lord." "Lord" was a title used by Greeks and was applied to Jesus when Christianity spread out of Palestine into Greek-speaking areas.

Some sermons consider why the disciples followed Jesus (the book presents ten reasons), along with why stories developed about Jesus and how they apply to us today. They explain what the phrase "Word of God" means and they show how the Word of God cuts through our present understanding.

Available in Paperback & Hardcover
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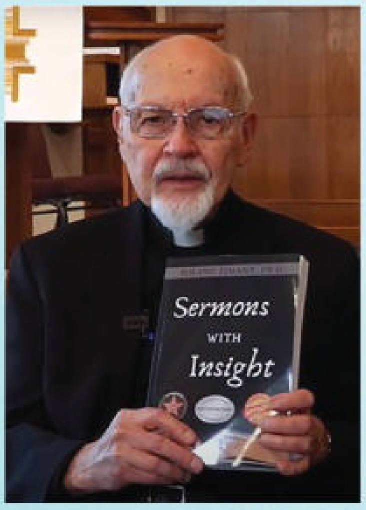


The Rev. Dr. Roland Daniel Zimany has been preaching and has been in the pastoral ministry since 1997. He served as interim pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in Jacksonville, Illinois in 1997 and as minister of Luther Memorial Church in Des Moines, Iowa in 1998 to 2003. Presently, he serves as pulpit supply minister at Deerfield Retirement Community and in other churches in the state of Iowa.

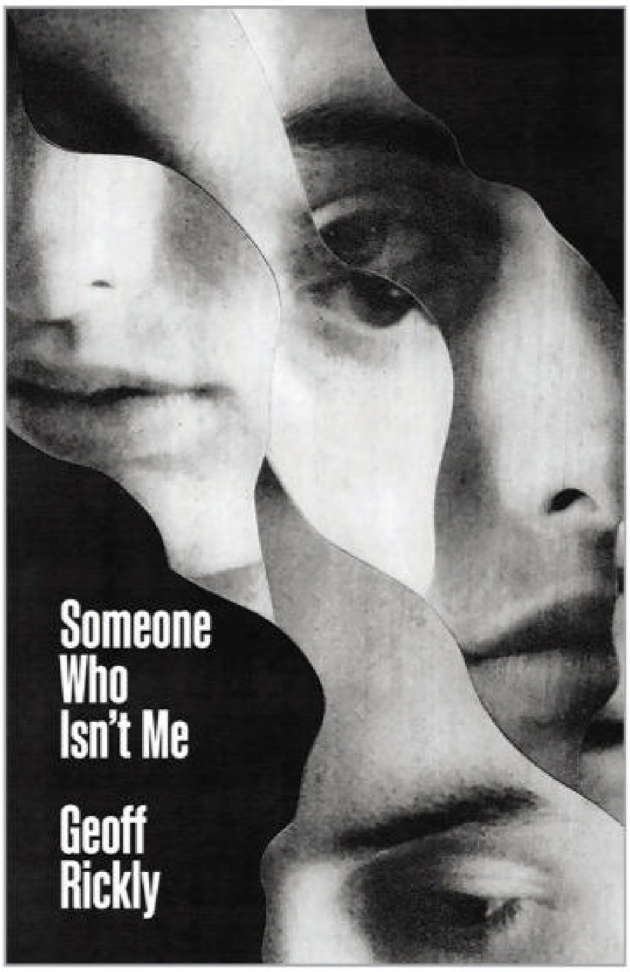
Pastor Zimany is a native of Irvington, New Jersey of Slovak heritage. In 1956, he went to pursue an education at Princeton University, earning the degree in Public and International Affairs, which later led him to work in business and government in the New York metropolitan area for fourteen years, mostly as a management analyst and as an interviewer. 1970 has always been the turning point of his life when a major career change took place. With a strong determination and faith in God, he went to Union Theological Seminary, from which he earned a Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree in 1974. Six years later, he earned a Doctor of Philosophy in Religion degree at Duke University in 1980, after spending a year at the University of Tuebingen, in Germany, which resulted in a book, entitled Vehicle for God: The Metaphorical Theology of Eberhard Juengle. In the same year after earning the doctorate degree, he became professor of Philosophy and Religion at Blackburn College in Carlinville, Illinois up until 1993.

He and his wife, Barbara, have been married since 1976.

An effective communicator of God's Word, the Rev. Dr. Roland Zimany is known for his practical and dynamic teaching style which helps people apply the timeless truths of Scripture to their everyday lives.

changed my life." She was still relatively unknown at the time, but Sampsell "published me because he believed in me, and I never forgot that."

Hodson was also a friend and collaborator of the late Giancarlo DiTrapano, the founder, publisher, and editor of Tyrant Books. "I had the gift of seeing the kind of work he did at Tyrant Books," she said, adding that she learned a lot about his philosophy of publishing. In 2017, Hodson and DiTrapano, who died in 2021, founded the Mors Tua Vita Mea workshop with the aim of nurturing a new generation of writers. Running the biannual workshop, she said, "taught me a lot about starting and running an LLC and doing things in an independently minded way."



In 2018, Hodson read a manuscript by the musician Geoff Rickly, who was looking for editorial feedback. She had been a fan of Rickly's since she was a teenager. She immediately fell in love with the manuscript and was struck by a thought: what if she published it? At first she dismissed starting her own press as a pipe dream. Then she remembered how Sampsell had believed in her and what DiTrapano had taught her about independent publishing.

She asked Rickly if he'd be open to publishing with her. "He trusted me enough to say yes, which meant the world to me," Hodson recalled. "This ultimately was all the boost I needed to set this idea into motion."

Rickly's novel, *Someone Who Isn't Me*, slated for July, will be the inaugural title published by Rose Books. *The Holy Day*, a novel by Christopher Norris, will be published in October, and an untitled book of poetry and short prose by Ashleah Gonzales is slated for spring. Rickly and Gonzales are debut authors, and Hodson is thrilled that Rose Books "has become a place to launch their writing careers."

Rose Books plans to release two titles per year. A limited-edition hardcover and a paperback edition of each title will be published simultaneously, and all Rose Books titles will be available for purchase only via the press's website, rosebooks.co.

For now, Hodson is the press's only official staff member. "Almost every day, I'm in a situation of learning how to do something I've never done before," she said, "whether that's finding the right printer that does clothbound covers, learning how to prepare a file for interior design, or learning how to set up an online store."

The learning curve is steep when it comes to the logistical and behind-the-scenes demands of publishing, but Hodson is facing the challenge with enthusiasm. "I know publishing independently will never be easy," she said, "but I am looking forward to being in the rhythm of publishing rather than every day being a brand-new learning experience."

She's not entirely without help: Hodson's husband, Mark McCoy, designed the Rose Books logo and helps with other design projects; her best friend, Megan Carter, is handling copyediting; Katie Coleman, a former workshop student of hers, is an editorial assistant; and Adam Robinson of the literary press Publishing Genius is doing interior design for the books. "I've assembled a team that can work for Rose Books on a case-by-case basis," Hodson said.

Hodson is currently funding the press herself, but she hopes that it can soon become self-sustaining. "I admire a lot of independent presses that are currently running, but I think there's pretty much always room for one more," she said. "I have to be mindful of staying within my budget, but I also am not afraid to make a more expensive book for the sake of it being more beautiful to hold in your hands."

Ultimately, Hodson's writing and her passion for Rose Books both stem from her desire to bring beauty to everyday life. "I think beautiful objects should exist," she said, "so I will work very hard to create them, both as a writer, and now, as a publisher." **—Sophia Stewart**

Call for Information

Feature: Fast-Growing Publishers
Deadline: Feb. 17 **Issue:** Mar. 20
Publishers with net sales between $2 million and $10 million are invited to submit information for our annual look at fast-growing presses. Submissions should include net sales for 2020, 2021, and 2022; sales will be kept confidential. Number of employees and number of new titles published each year are also required, as well as a description of what drove the sales gains. Send information to jmilliot@publishersweekly.com.

DEALS

By Rachel Deahl

DEAL OF THE WEEK

Renkl 'Comforts' Spiegel & Grau

© HEIDI ROSS

Renkl

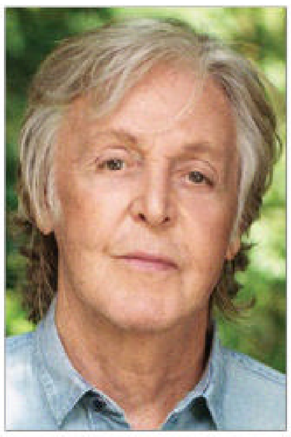
Joey McGarvey, in her first acquisition at Spiegel & Grau, bought world rights to **Margaret Renkl**'s *The Comfort of Crows*. The book from the *New York Times* opinion columnist and bestseller, which is subtitled *A Backyard Year*, is, S&G said, "a literary devotional that charts the passing of seasons, both personal and natural." *The Comfort of Crows* was sold by **Kristyn Keene Benton** at ICM/CAA and features four-color art by Renkl's brother and frequent collaborator **Billy Renkl**. It's slated for October.

Dell Makes Kumar 'Mine'

Kumar

Say You'll Be Mine, the debut novel by **Naina Kumar**, was preempted in a two-book, North American rights agreement by Dell's **Kara Cesare**. **Johanna Castillo** at Writers House sold the book, which Dell said was pitched as "*My Best Friend's Wedding* meets *Indian Matchmaking*." It follows "a young woman who—to survive being the best man at the wedding of her ex, for whom she still has feelings—enters into a fake engagement with the man her parents always wanted for her." The second novel in the deal is currently untitled.

McCartney 'Eyes' Liveright



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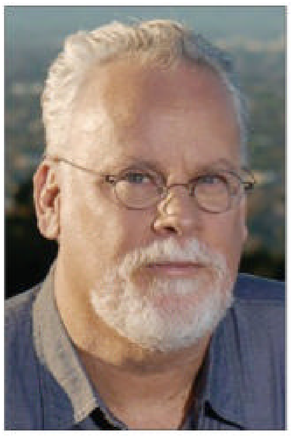
McCartney

For Liveright, **Robert Weil** bought world rights to *1964: Eyes of the Storm* by **Paul McCartney**. The book, subtitled *Photographs and Reflections*, features images McCartney shot on his 35 mm camera in 1963 and 1964, along with an introduction from Jill Lepore and a foreword by McCartney himself. The photographs, per Liveright, record the period "when Beatlemania erupted in the U.K." and the band "became the most famous people on the planet." They are "McCartney's personal record of this explosive time, when the Beatles were inside looking out and were the 'Eyes of the Storm.'" The title is set for June and accompanies an exhibition of the photos at the National Portrait Gallery in London. McCartney didn't use an agent in the deal.

Connelly Re-ups at Little, Brown



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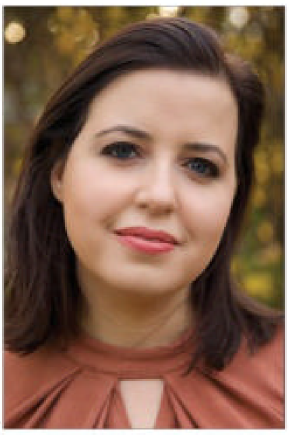
Connelly

In a five-book agreement, **Michael Connelly** re-upped with his standing publisher, Little, Brown. The bestselling author was represented by **Heather Rizzo**, who sold world rights to the titles to **Bruce Nichols**. Connelly, recently selected as the 2023 grand master of the Mystery Writers of America, will publish his 38th novel (covered under an earlier contract), *Resurrection Walk*, with LB in November.

Carmon Goes to One Signal



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Carmon

One Signal's **Julia Cheiffetz** won world rights to *Unbearable: Being Pregnant in America* by **Irin Carmon** at auction. Carmon is a *New York* magazine senior correspondent, and the publisher called the book "an urgent account of how the Supreme Court's *Dobbs* decision is dramatically worsening a patchwork system whose injustices have been decades in the making." It blends "on-the-ground reporting and profiles with legal and political history, feminist analysis, and personal storytelling." *Unbearable* is slated for spring 2025, and Carmon was represented in the agreement by **Linda Loewenthal** at the Loewenthal Company.

RH Enters Grandjean's 'Kingdom'

Grandjean

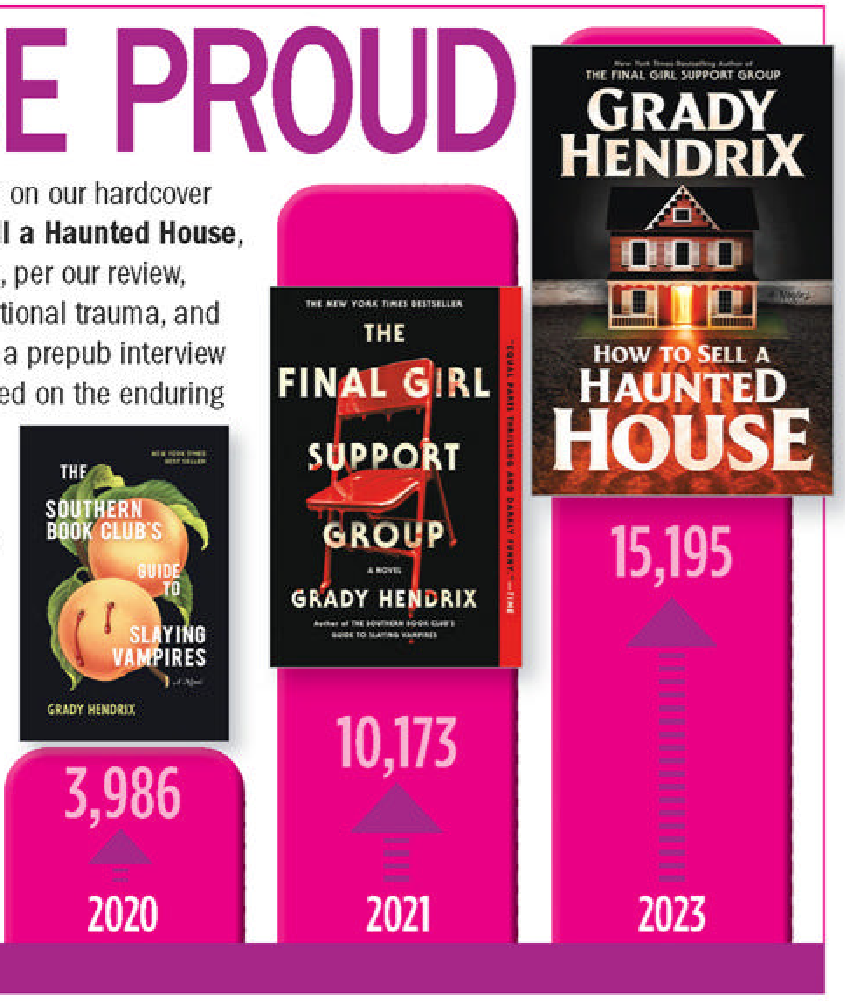
Random House's **Molly Turpin** bought North American rights to **Katherine Grandjean**'s *Kingdom of Devils*. The nonfiction work, sold by **Katherine Flynn** at Kneerim & Williams at auction, examines a moment in American history through the story of the Harp brothers, recognized as the country's first serial killers. The publisher said Grandjean, a professor at Wellesley College, explores "their brutal string of murders on the post-revolutionary frontier, revealing the young United States as an unsettled, often merciless place whose legacy of violence remains with us today."

Behind the Bestsellers JAN. 15–21, 2023

By Carolyn Juris

HOUSE PROUD

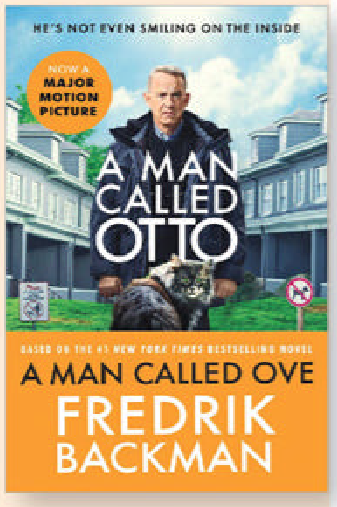
Grady Hendrix lands at #5 on our hardcover fiction list with **How to Sell a Haunted House**, a "wildly entertaining" tale, per our review, animated by "grief, generational trauma, and some sinister puppets." In a prepub interview with *PW*, Hendrix speculated on the enduring fascination with ghostly domiciles. "We really like to form connections with things that aren't human," he said. "Maybe it's a two-way street and the place has feelings about you back."



RECENT FIRST-WEEK PRINT UNIT SALES FOR GRADY HENDRIX

Screening Room

After a limited theatrical release on December 30, the Tom Hanks vehicle *A Man Called Otto* opened nationwide on January 13. It's a retitled adaptation of Swedish author Fredrik Backman's blockbuster debut, **A Man Called Ove**, which has sold in the neighborhood of two million print copies. The tie-in edition pubbed at the end of November and debuts at #15 on our trade paper list.



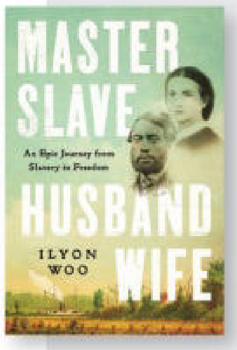
HE'S NOT EVEN SMILING ON THE INSIDE
NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE
A MAN CALLED OTTO
A MAN CALLED OVE
FREDRIK BACKMAN

NEW & NOTABLE

The Creative Act: A Way of Being
Rick Rubin

THE CREATIVE ACT
Rick Rubin
#2 Hardcover Nonfiction, #4 overall

The Grammy-winning music producer debuts with "a meditative manual on how to boost one's creativity," according to our review. "The dispatches read like ancient spiritual texts in their Zen-like wisdom, as when Rubin writes, 'Accessing childlike spirit in our art and our lives is worth aspiring to.'"



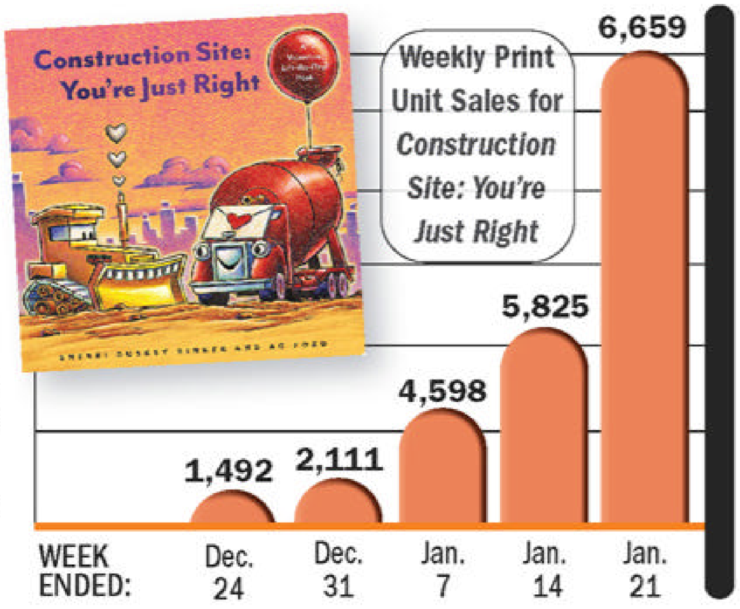
MASTER SLAVE HUSBAND WIFE
Ilyon Woo
#18 Hardcover Nonfiction

"Woo seamlessly knits together an in-depth portrait of antebellum America and a thrilling account of an enslaved couple's escape to freedom," per our review. The author "expertly portrays the gruesome details of slave auctions [and] the exploits of antislavery activists including William Still and Mifflin Wistar Gibbs. This novelistic history soars."

ALL PRINT UNIT SALES PER NPD BOOKSCAN EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

I DIG U

The Valentine's Day–themed **Construction Site: You're Just Right** by Sherri Duskey Rinker, illus. by A.G. Ford, a lift-the-flap board book, is the latest in the series that began with 2011's *Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site* (illus. by Tom Lichtenheld). It pubbed in December, and sales have been building in the run-up to the holiday. This week, it moves up nine positions on our picture book list to #13.



TOP 10 OVERALL

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	UNITS
1	**Spare**	Prince Harry	Random House	195,619
2	**It Starts with Us**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	48,435
3	**It Ends with Us**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	44,831
4	**The Creative Act**	Rick Rubin	Penguin Press	36,087
5	**Atomic Habits**	James Clear	Avery	34,401
6	**Verity**	Colleen Hoover	Grand Central	29,887
7	**The Cabinet of Dr. Leng**	Preston/Child	Grand Central	22,532
8	**Little Blue Truck's Valentine**	Schertle/McElmurry	Clarion	22,267
9	**Lessons in Chemistry**	Bonnie Garmus	Doubleday	21,640
10	**Straight Shooter**	Stephen A. Smith	13A	21,309

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Adult Bestsellers | JAN. 15–21, 2023

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Hardcover Frontlist Fiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	–	The Cabinet of Dr. Leng	Preston/Child	Grand Central	9781538736777	22,532
2	3	Lessons in Chemistry	Bonnie Garmus	Doubleday	9780385547345	21,640
3	1	The House of Wolves	Patterson/Lupica	Little, Brown	9780316404297	18,835
4	5	Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow	Gabrielle Zevin	Knopf	9780593321201	16,055
5	–	How to Sell a Haunted House	Grady Hendrix	Berkley	9780593201268	15,195
6	4	The House in the Pines	Ana Reyes	Dutton	9780593186718	13,019
7	6	The Boys from Biloxi	John Grisham	Doubleday	9780385548922	11,043
8	2	Hell Bent	Leigh Bardugo	Flatiron	9781250313102	9,844
9	7	Without a Trace	Danielle Steel	Delacorte	9781984821867	8,259
10	8	Demon Copperhead	Barbara Kingsolver	Harper	9780063251922	7,964
11	9	Fairy Tale	Stephen King	Scribner	9781668002179	7,695
12	11	Mad Honey	Picoult/Boylan	Ballantine	9781984818386	6,519
13	–	The Shards	Bret Easton Ellis	Knopf	9780593535608	5,405
14	12	Verity	Colleen Hoover	Grand Central	9781538739723	5,045
15	13	Dreamland	Nicholas Sparks	Random House	9780593449554	4,976
16	14	Desert Star	Michael Connelly	Little, Brown	9780316485654	4,399
17	23	Remarkably Bright Creatures	Shelby Van Pelt	Ecco	9780063204157	4,084
18	–	The Mitford Affair	Marie Benedict	Sourcebooks Landmark	9781728229362	3,803
19	19	Horse	Geraldine Brooks	Viking	9780399562969	3,791
20	18	Tom Clancy: Red Winter	Marc Cameron	Putnam	9780593422755	3,744

Hardcover Frontlist Nonfiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	Spare	Prince Harry	Random House	9780593593806	195,619
2	–	The Creative Act	Rick Rubin	Penguin Press	9780593652886	36,087
3	–	Straight Shooter	Stephen A. Smith	13A	9781982189495	21,309
4	2	The Light We Carry	Michelle Obama	Crown	9780593237465	16,643
5	7	The Nazi Conspiracy	Meltzer/Mensch	Flatiron	9781250777263	14,566
6	5	I'm Glad My Mom Died	Jennette McCurdy	Simon & Schuster	9781982185824	12,776
7	–	Saving Aziz	Chad Robichaux	Thomas Nelson	9781400238132	10,291
8	8	Good Boundaries and Goodbyes	Lysa TerKeurst	Thomas Nelson	9781400211760	7,641
9	4	The Good Life	Waldinger/Schulz	Simon & Schuster	9781982166694	6,788
10	–	Buy Back Your Time	Dan Martell	Portfolio	9780593422977	6,699
11	10	Go-to Dinners	Ina Garten	Clarkson Potter	9781984822789	6,699
12	3	One: Simple One-Pan Wonders	Jamie Oliver	Flatiron	9781250871008	5,708
13	9	Faith Still Moves Mountains	Harris Faulkner	Broadside	9780063225930	5,653
14	12	Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing	Matthew Perry	Flatiron	9781250866448	5,560
15	22	The End of the World Is Just the Beginning	Peter Zeihan	Harper Business	9780063230477	4,657
16	6	The Galveston Diet	Mary Claire Haver	Rodale	9780593578896	4,487
17	–	I'm No Philosopher, but I Got Thoughts	Kristin Chenoweth	Harper Celebrate	9781400228492	4,454
18	–	Master Slave Husband Wife	Ilyon Woo	Simon & Schuster	9781501191053	4,435
19	18	Plantyou	Carleigh Bodrug	Hachette Go	9780306923043	4,315
20	–	Day by Day Guided Journal	Jess Conte	Worthy	9781546015949	4,022

LW: rank last week

Adult Bestsellers | JAN. 15–21, 2023

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Mass Market Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	**Rich Dad Poor Dad**	Robert T. Kiyosaki	Plata	9781612681139	7,015
2	2	**High Stakes**	Danielle Steel	Dell	9781984821737	4,641
3	3	**Desperation in Death**	J.D. Robb	St. Martin's	9781250849717	4,156
4	4	**21st Birthday**	Patterson/Paetro	Grand Central	9781538752869	3,734
5	6	**A Gambling Man**	David Baldacci	Grand Central	9781538719657	2,993
6	5	**Preacher's Purge**	Johnstone/Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786049868	2,589
7	8	**The Judge's List**	John Grisham	Vintage	9780593157831	2,420
8	12	**A Face to Die For**	Iris Johansen	Grand Central	9781538713228	2,408
9	7	**Smoke Screen**	Sandra Brown	Pocket	9781982187958	2,282
10	9	**Steal**	Patterson/Roughan	Grand Central	9781538720752	2,247
11	10	**Navy Grooms**	Debbie Macomber	Mira	9780778386803	2,176
12	11	**Invisible**	Danielle Steel	Dell	9781984821607	2,138
13	18	**A Chance Inheritance**	Carolyn Brown	Sourcebooks Casablanca	9781728249711	2,082
14	19	**The Bluebird Bakery**	Lee Tobin McClain	HQN	9781335427434	2,009
15	13	**Secret Getaway**	Nora Roberts	Silhouette	9781335425997	1,833
16	14	**A Slow Fire Burning**	Paula Hawkins	Riverhead	9780593543849	1,811
17	45	**The True Love Bookshop**	Annie Rains	Forever	9781538710067	1,746
18	15	**Bad Days for Bad Men**	Johnstone/Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786049998	1,639
19	29	**Cruel Winter of the Mountain Man**	Johnstone/Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786048946	1,624
20	25	**The Awakening**	Nora Roberts	St. Martin's	9781250771728	1,523

Trade Paperback Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	**It Starts with Us**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668001226	48,435
2	2	**Reminders of Him**	Colleen Hoover	Montlake	9781542025607	17,719
3	5	**The Maid**	Nita Prose	Ballantine	9780593356173	10,616
4	7	**Twisted Love**	Ana Huang	Bloom	9781728274867	9,722
5	9	**Maybe Now**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668013342	7,875
6	–	**Tatsuki Fujimoto Before Chainsaw Man: 17–21**	Tatsuki Fujimoto	Viz	9781974734771	7,585
7	6	**Loathe to Love You**	Ali Hazelwood	Berkley	9780593437803	7,454
8	10	**Spare** (large-print ed.)	Prince Harry	Random House	9780593677865	6,838
9	14	**The Housemaid**	Freida McFadden	Grand Central	9781538742570	6,826
10	12	**Book Lovers**	Emily Henry	Berkley	9780593334836	6,644
11	8	**Hour Game**	David Baldacci	Grand Central	9781538709580	6,619
12	15	**A Court of Silver Flames**	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781635577990	6,442
13	–	**The Jailhouse Lawyer**	Patterson/Allen	Grand Central	9781538752579	5,616
14	17	**Every Summer After**	Carley Fortune	Berkley	9780593438534	5,571
15	21	**A Man Called Ove** (media tie-in)	Fredrik Backman	Washington Square	9781668010815	5,039
16	20	**Never Finished**	David Goggins	Lioncrest	9781544534077	4,802
17	4	**Kaiju No. 8, Vol. 5**	Naoya Matsumoto	Viz	9781974734184	4,541
18	23	**Twisted Games**	Ana Huang	Bloom	9781728274874	4,257
19	–	**The 40-Day Feast**	Wendy Speake	Baker	9781540901255	4,086
20	16	**A Flicker in the Dark**	Stacy Willingham	Minotaur	9781250803849	3,860

LW: rank last week

Children's Bestsellers | JAN. 15–21, 2023

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Children's Frontlist Fiction

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	**Diper Överlöde** (Diary of a Wimpy Kid #17)	Jeff Kinney	Amulet	9781419762949	13,529
2	**Collaborations** (Cat Kid Comic Club #4)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338846621	13,454
3	**Moon Rising** (Wings of Fire Graphic Novel #6)	Sutherland/Holmes	Graphix	9781338730890	12,952
4	**Mary Anne's Bad Luck Mystery** (The Baby-Sitters Club Graphic Novel #13)	Martin/Cheng	Graphix	9781338616101	9,232
5	**The Stolen Heir**	Holly Black	Little, Brown	9780316592703	6,908
6	**Karen's Birthday** (Baby-Sitters Little Sister Graphic Novel #6)	Martin/Farina	Graphix	9781338762587	5,764
7	**Nick and Charlie** (Heartstopper)	Alice Oseman	Scholastic Press	9781338885101	5,718
8	**Good Girl, Bad Blood**	Holly Jackson	Ember	9781984896438	5,265
9	**Bluebird**	Sharon Cameron	Scholastic	9781338355970	4,946
10	**The Hawthorne Legacy**	Jennifer Lynn Barnes	Little, Brown	9780316105187	3,973
11	**Jessi's Secret Language** (The Baby-Sitters Club Graphic Novel #12)	Martin/Chau	Graphix	9781338616071	3,847
12	**Mysteries of Thorn Manor** (Sorcery of Thorns)	Margaret Rogerson	McElderry	9781665935616	3,641
13	**Better Than the Movies**	Lynn Painter	Simon & Schuster	9781534467637	3,406
14	**The Final Gambit**	Jennifer Lynn Barnes	Little, Brown	9780316370950	2,951
15	**The First to Die at the End**	Adam Silvera	Quill Tree	9780063240803	2,892
16	**Highly Suspicious and Unfairly Cute**	Talia Hibbert	Joy Revolution	9780593482353	2,767
17	**Long Live the Pumpkin Queen: Tim Burton's the Nightmare Before Christmas**	Shea Ernshaw	Disney Press	9781368069601	2,661
18	**On Purpose** (Cat Kid Comic Club #3)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338801941	2,638
19	**Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix**	Rowling/Kay/Packer	Scholastic	9780545791434	2,637
20	**Five Survive**	Holly Jackson	Delacorte	9780593374160	2,543
21	**When You Trap a Tiger**	Tae Keller	Yearling	9781524715731	2,510
22	**Five Nights at Freddy's** (Fazbear Frights Graphic Novel Collection #1)	Scott Cawthon	Graphix	9781338792676	2,340
23	**Somniphobia** (Five Nights at Freddy's: Tales from the Pizzaplex #3)	Scott Cawthon	Scholastic	9781338831672	2,302
24	**Lightlark**	Alex Aster	Amulet	9781419760860	2,200
25	**You'd Be Home Now**	Kathleen Glasgow	Ember	9780525708070	2,156

Children's Picture Books

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	**Little Blue Truck's Valentine**	Schertle/McElmurry	Clarion	9780358272441	22,267
2	**You're My Little Cuddle Bug**	Edwards/Marshall	Silver Dolphin	9781684122585	18,300
3	**I Love You to the Moon and Back**	Hepworth/Warnes	Tiger Tales	9781589255517	14,037
4	**The Very Hungry Caterpillar**	Eric Carle	Philomel	9780399226908	12,459
5	**Happy Valentine's Day, Mouse!**	Numeroff/Bond	HarperFestival	9780061804328	9,935
6	**Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?**	Martin/Carle	Holt	9780805047905	9,609
7	**I Love You Like No Otter**	Rossner/Hanson	Sourcebooks Wonderland	9781728213743	9,180
8	**My First I See You**	Eric Carle	Little Simon	9781534424548	8,926
9	**Goodnight Moon**	Brown/Hurd	HarperFestival	9780694003617	8,524
10	**Love from the Very Hungry Caterpillar**	Eric Carle	World of Eric Carle	9780448489322	8,170
11	**Guess How Much I Love You**	McBratney/Jeram	Candlewick	9781536210637	7,987
12	**Bluey 5-Minute Stories**	–	Penguin Young Readers	9780593521908	7,844
13	**Construction Site: You're Just Right**	Rinker/Ford	Chronicle	9781797204307	6,659
14	**How to Catch a Loveosaurus**	Walstead/Elkerton	Sourcebooks Wonderland	9781728268781	6,560
15	**Llama Llama I Love You**	Anna Dewdney	Viking	9780451469816	6,484
16	**There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Rose!**	Colandro/Lee	Scholastic	9780545352239	6,323
17	**The Wonderful Things You Will Be**	Emily Winfield Martin	Random House	9780385376716	6,191
18	**I Love You, Little Pookie**	Sandra Boynton	Boynton Bookworks	9781534437234	6,169
19	**Chicka Chicka Boom Boom**	Martin/Archambault/Ehlert	Little Simon	9781442450707	6,072
20	**Grumpy Monkey Valentine Gross-Out**	Lang/Lang	Random House Studio	9780593486924	6,063
21	**I'll Love You Till the Cows Come Home**	Cristaldi/Litten	HarperFestival	9780062574220	5,980
22	**In My Heart: A Book of Feelings**	Witek/Roussey	Appleseed	9781419713101	5,938
23	**Love You Forever**	Munsch/McGraw	Firefly	9780920668375	5,799
24	**Peppa's Valentine's Day**	Courtney Carbone	Scholastic	9781338158977	5,463
25	**If Animals Kissed Good Night**	Paul/Walker	FSG	9780374300210	5,404

Column | **DIGITAL PERSPECTIVES**

On the Quest for Trusted Content

Bill Kasdorf

Three new organizations are developing "certificates of authenticity" for media assets, to meet the threat of deepfakes, fake news, and other counterfeits

It wasn't long ago when most people scoffed at artificial intelligence. It seemed ridiculous that a computer could ever duplicate, or even credibly approximate, what a human being can do—especially to create brand new content from scratch. But that's exactly what a particular class of AI apps, called generative AI, can do. Suddenly, it seems as if maybe *AI* may really mean "author (or artist) invisible."

Generative AI is already good enough for use in certain contexts. For example, in journalism, it is used to write routine and often somewhat formulaic articles on subjects like finance, reporting notable results from public companies, or real estate, reporting on recent real estate deals, sometimes based on human-created templates. Such straightforward uses seem perfectly reasonable.

The recent experimental release by OpenAI of a "chat bot" called ChatGPT has taken things to the next level, however. There has been a flurry of interest in this in both mainstream and social media. While not always perfect, it's shockingly good.

As an example, I recently complimented Brendan Quinn, the managing director of the IPTC, the technical standards organization for the global news media, about the excellent job he had done in writing a blog that he ran by me for review. It was engagingly written, informative, well organized, and spot-on with regard to the content. His response: "Don't compliment me. ChatGPT wrote that. I just added some formatting and links, and a bit of extra information that I forgot to put in the prompt."

This is both very exciting and very scary. I'm an experienced writer and editor; there was nothing about that blog post that made me doubt that Brendan had written it. It was a useful time-saver for Brendan. It will also be useful to a student needing to write a paper for a class, on which, ahem, they will be graded. A university professor recently reported that of all the essays submitted for a recent assignment, the one that was easily the best paper in the class turned out to have been written by ChatGPT.

How can a publisher know how much of a book has actually been written by the author who claims to have written it? (In case you're wondering, no, ChatGPT didn't write this column.) And ChatGPT is just one of many such generative AI apps for text in development.

> "This is a crisis of authenticity, and of provenance.

A time to act

In the long view, does it matter that computers can create content that can't be distinguished from human-created content? Isn't that just progress? Google itself put a few competitors out of business because it developed something new and really good, after all. Most of us depend on it and are happy to have it. Should we be worried that computers can now create content and images? Doesn't that sound pretty useful?

You bet we should be worried. I can give you an example that will drive the point home: deepfakes. Deepfakes are images or audio that most notoriously show a famous person doing or saying something they didn't really do or say because their likeness or voice has been grafted onto somebody else's image or voice so convincingly that you can't tell it's not who it purports to be.

The software used to do this is readily available and widely used. There are legitimate uses—for example, a fake person can be created for an advertisement to save the cost of a human actor or model. One of the leading such image-creation apps, DALL-E 2, happens also to be from OpenAI, the developer of ChatGPT. It can create images of people from thin air that cannot be distinguished from images of real people. This is called synthetic media. It, too, is shockingly good. You have probably seen such images without realizing they're fake. There are many such apps for creating synthetic images in development.

But for publishers, and their customers, it's even more insidious. How can you trust that the content you're reading or the images you're seeing have been created by the people you think created them, or haven't been manipulated or altered in ways you can't detect?

The counterfeiting question

Here's another example, this one not having anything to do with AI or synthetic media, but which is actually a more urgent issue for publishers: counterfeiting. It is a crisis that many commercial publishers, including the very biggest in the world, are facing today: "counterfeit" publishers representing themselves as real publishers and selling their books online for lower prices than those offered by the real publishers.

This is particularly damaging because those fake publishers tend to rise to the top of the results in the retailers' platforms: they sell the books at lower prices, so they get more action. Some of the books are pirated and of lower quality (though the buyers can't tell that until they receive the books); some are identical to the publishers' versions, so the buyers may not even know there was anything illegal about the transactions. An industry colleague of mine, who works for a large commercial publisher, mentioned recently that some of its books have had no sales on a certain retail platform because all of the sales of those books went to counterfeit publishers. All of the sales.

This is a crisis of authenticity, and of provenance. Is the author who they say they are? Is the content what the author created in the first place? Is the version I'm buying the legitimate one from the legitimate publisher? Has this image or video been manipulated? Is the result legitimate or not? Cropping an image is probably okay (though removing relevant context can be misleading); making Joe Schmo look like Tom Cruise is not okay. Making Nancy Pelosi look and sound drunk is not okay.

Progress is being made

In addressing the issues of authenticity and provenance, the good news is significant work is being done, and real progress is being made. Because the most critical problem is deepfakes in news, the work has been driven largely, but not exclusively, by the news media. Most of the focus so far has been on image authenticity, but the work is intended to apply to any media—be it textual, visual, video, or audio.

What is being developed is basically a "certificate of authenticity," tamper-proof or tamper-evident metadata that can confirm who created a media asset, who altered it over time, how it was altered, and whether the entity providing it is legitimate. This metadata is embedded in the content itself, and there are systems enabling recipients to access it, to document the asset's provenance (what has been done to it over time, by whom) and validate, or invalidate, its authenticity.

This work is a notable example of industry collaboration and cooperation. It was clear from the outset that no one commercial entity could own the solution; solutions need to be open, freely available, standardized, and global. Three new organizations in particular are doing key work to make this happen.

> “Fake publishers selling the books of real publishers is a big problem.

The Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity (C2PA) is developing the technical standards that underpin this work. As documented on the C2PA website (c2pa.org), "C2PA is a Joint Development Foundation project, formed through an alliance between Adobe, Arm, Intel, Microsoft and Truepic. C2PA unifies the efforts of the Adobe-led Content Authenticity Initiative (CAI) which focuses on systems to provide context and history for digital media, and Project Origin, a Microsoft- and BBC-led initiative that tackles disinformation in the digital news ecosystem." Version 1.0 of the specification was released in February 2022, enabling content producers to "digitally sign" metadata using C2PA "assertions"—statements documenting the authenticity and provenance of a media asset. Based on the W3C Verifiable Credentials standard, it is now in version 1.2 and is already enjoying broad support, including in the widely used Adobe Photoshop, where it is called Content Credentials.

The Content Authenticity Initiative (CAI), founded by Adobe in 2019 in collaboration with Twitter and the *New York Times* with an initial focus on images and video, is now, according to its website (contentauthenticity.org), "a group of hundreds of creators, technologists, journalists, activists, and leaders who seek to address misinformation and content authenticity at scale." As CAI's Verify website (verify.contentauthenticity.org) states, "Content credentials are the history and identity data attached to images. With Verify, you can view this data when a creator or producer has attached it to an image to understand more about what's been done to it, where it's been, and who's responsible. Content credentials are public and tamper-evident, and can include info like edits and activity, assets used, identity info, and more."

In contrast, Project Origin—led by the BBC, CBC/Radio-Canada, Microsoft, and the *New York Times*—is news and information oriented. Per its website (originproject.info), it is developing "a framework for an engineering approach, initially focusing on video, images, and audio. The technical approach and standards aim to offer publishers a way to maintain the integrity of their content in a complex media ecosystem. The methods, we hope, will allow social platforms to be sure they are publishing content that has originated with the named publishers—a key in the fight against the imposter content and disinformation" and "help shield the public against the rising danger of manipulated media and 'deep fakes,' by offering tools [again, based on the C2PA spec] that can be used to better understand the disinformation they are being served and help them to maintain their confidence in the integrity of media content from trusted organisations."

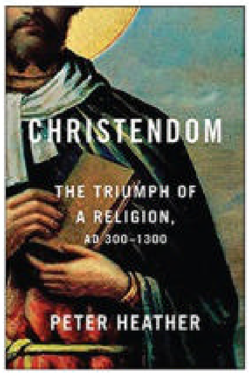
The progress on these initiatives has been very rapid. I'm encouraged by how well these three organizations—and the organizations that comprise them—are collaborating for the common good, creating an open ecosystem to guard against disinformation, deepfakes, fake news, and counterfeit sellers in a globally standardized, noncommercial way. ■

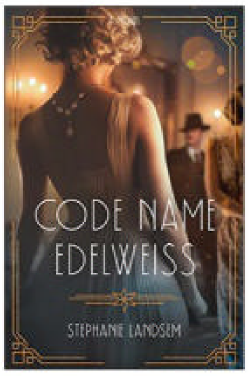
Bill Kasdorf is principal at Kasdorf & Associates, a consultancy focusing on accessibility, information architecture, and editorial and workflows.

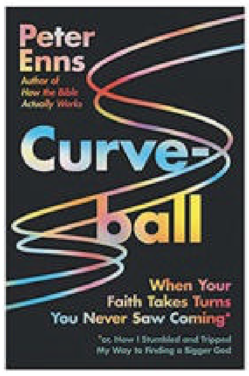
SPRING 2023 RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

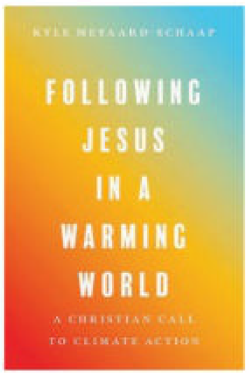
By Miriam Grossman

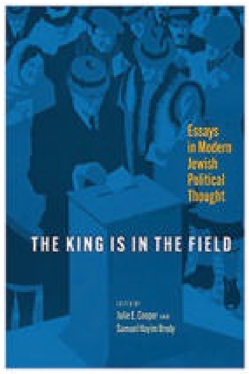
This season's titles include memoirs on racial identity, deep dives into end-of-times philosophies, and perspectives on issues from climate change to conspiracy theories.

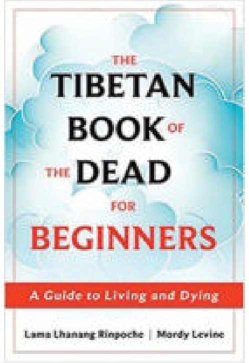

CHRISTENDOM
THE TRIUMPH OF A RELIGION, AD 300–1300
PETER HEATHER


CODE NAME EDELWEISS
STEPHANIE LANDSEM


Peter Enns
Curveball
When Your Faith Takes Turns You Never Saw Coming


KYLE MEYAARD-SCHAAP
FOLLOWING JESUS IN A WARMING WORLD
A CHRISTIAN CALL TO CLIMATE ACTION


Essays in Modern Jewish Political Thought
THE KING IS IN THE FIELD


THE TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD FOR BEGINNERS
A Guide to Living and Dying
Lama Lhanang Rinpoche | Mordy Levine

TOP 10

Asian American Apostate: Losing Religion and Finding Myself at an Evangelical University
R. Scott Okamoto. Lake Drive, Apr. 18 ($18.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-957687-13-1)
A musician recounts his experiences as an Asian American teaching at a conservative Christian college rife with homophobia, misogyny, purity culture, and racism.

Christendom: The Triumph of a Religion, AD 300–1300
Peter Heather. Knopf, Apr. 4 ($35, ISBN 978-0-451-49430-6)
Historian Heather tracks the growth and spread of early Christianity, from its emergence in Palestine to its eventual widespread dominance in Europe.

Code Name Edelweiss
Stephanie Landsem. Tyndale, Mar. 7 ($26.99, ISBN 978-1-4964-6066-0)
In this 1933-set novel, Jewish lawyer Leon Lewis conscripts reluctant German-born Liesl Weiss as a spy to track a wave of Nazism spreading through Hollywood.

Curveball: When Your Faith Takes Turns You Never Saw Coming (or How I Stumbled and Tripped My Way to Finding a Bigger God)
Peter Enns. HarperOne, Feb. 7 ($27.99, ISBN 978-0-06-309347-8)
A Bible scholar explains how Christians can use life's "curveballs" to embrace doubt, critically reexamine God and the Bible, and forge a stronger faith.

Everybody Come Alive: A Memoir in Essays
Marcie Alvis Walker. Convergent, May 30 ($27, ISBN 978-0-593-44372-9)
Black Coffee with White Friends blogger Walker discusses coming of age in the post–Jim Crow South, her mother's mental illness, racial trauma, struggles with body dysmorphia, and God.

Following Jesus in a Warming World: A Christian Call to Climate Action
Kyle Meyaard-Schaap. IVP, Feb. 21 ($18 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5140-0445-6)
Meyaard-Schaap, a vice-president of the Evangelical Environmental Network, considers the scriptural basis for climate activism, explores why it's historically been considered un-evangelical, and advocates for change.

In Feast or Famine
Mesu Andrews. Waterbrook, May 23 ($17 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-593-19378-5)
In this biblical romance, Asenath is promised by her high priest father to the newly appointed Hebrew vizier Joseph and must decide whether to trust her husband and his foreign God.

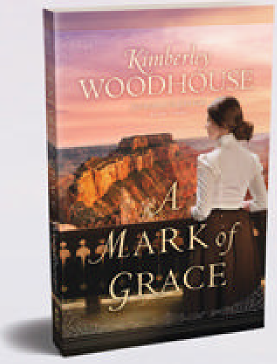
The King Is in the Field: Essays in Modern Jewish Political Thought
Edited by Julie Cooper and Samuel Hayim Brody. Univ. of Pennsylvania, June 6 ($69.95, ISBN 978-1-5128-2409-4)
Contributors examine how Jewish communities have engaged with politics during two millennia of statelessness and beyond.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead for Beginners: A Guide to Living and Dying
Lama Lhanang Rinpoche, Mordy Levine. Sounds True, June 27 ($18.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64963-132-9)
Buddhist teacher Lhanang and *Meditation Pro Series* creator Levine share wisdom inspired by the classic Tibetan Buddhist text. 35,000-copy announced first printing.

The Wonder Paradox: Embracing the Weirdness of Existence and the Poetry of Our Lives
Jennifer Michael Hecht. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Mar. 7 ($29, ISBN 978-0-374-29274-4)
A poet and historian offers up poetry as a vital site of meaning in a society that's becoming more secular.

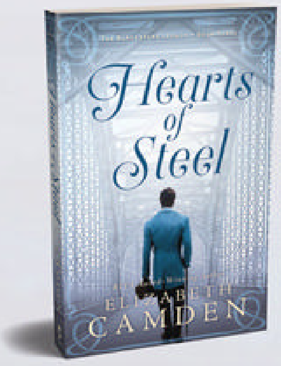
Heart and Hope

from Bestselling and Award-Winning Authors



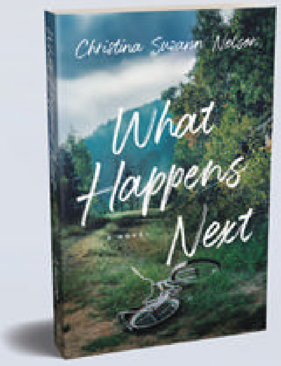
A grand historical romance series finale set on the edge of the Grand Canyon.

A Mark of Grace by Kimberley Woodhouse
Secrets of the Canyon #3
TP | 978-0-7642-3802-4 | $16.99



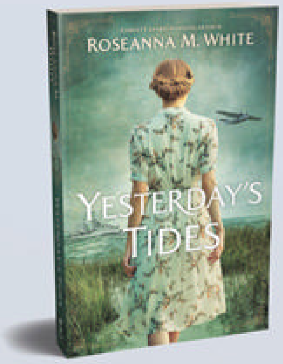
A dramatic and sweeping Gilded Age tale brimming with family drama, romance, and history.

Hearts of Steel by Elizabeth Camden The Blackstone Legacy #3
TP 978-0-7642-3845-1 | $16.99



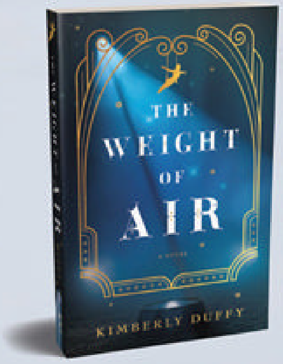
A 1980s cold case brings together an investigative podcaster and a mother who are both desperate for healing.

What Happens Next by Christina Suzann Nelson
TP | 978-0-7642-4040-9 | $16.99



Set during World War I and World War II, intelligence and counterintelligence, prejudice, and self-sacrifice collide.

Yesterday's Tides by Roseanna M. White
TP | 978-0-7642-4001-0 | $16.99



Set in 1911 New York, a circus strong woman and an aerialist find that true strength comes in many forms.

The Weight of Air by Kimberly Duffy
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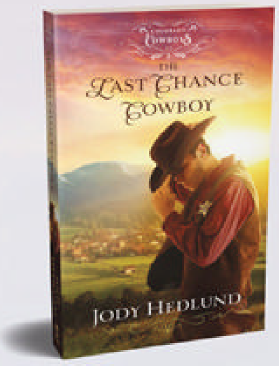

In post-Civil War Colorado, a sheriff with a dark past has his world turned upside down when met with an unexpected arrival.

The Last Chance Cowboy by Jody Hedlund
Colorado Cowboys #5
TP | 978-0-7642-3643-3 | $17.99

In Gilded Age Newport, a young matchmaker is tasked with finding the city's most eligible bachelor a wife.

A Match in the Making by Jen Turano
The Matchmakers #1
TP | 978-0-7642-4020-1 | $16.99

In frontier Wyoming, a woman is hunted by outlaws but will do anything to continue her father's legacy.

Forged in Love by Mary Connealy
Wyoming Sunrise #1
TP | 978-0-7642-4113-0 | $16.99

Reminiscent of Francine Rivers's *Redeeming Love*, this tender tale features forgiveness, faith, and love conquering all.

Remember Me by Tracie Peterson
Pictures of the Heart #1
TP | 978-0-7642-3738-6 | $16.99
HC | 978-0-7642-3739-3 | $26.99

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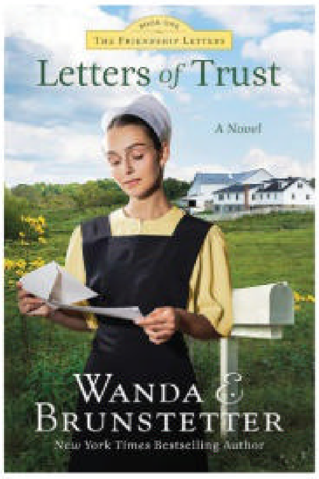
Fiction

ATRIA

Just Once by Karen Kingsbury (Apr. 25, $27.99, ISBN 978-1-982104-44-3). It's 1941, and beautiful Irvel Ellis is dating Sam but is secretly in love with his brother Hank—a situation that grows thorny when Pearl Harbor is attacked, Sam enlists, and Irvel and Hank bond on the home front.

BARBOUR

Letters of Trust (Friendship Letters #1) by Wanda E. Brunstetter (Mar. 1, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-63609-334-5). Newlyweds Vic and Eleanor Lapp are blissfully happy on their Pennsylvania Amish farm until a family death drives Vic to alcohol, imperiling the marriage and prompting Eleanor to write to her friend Doretta seeking advice.



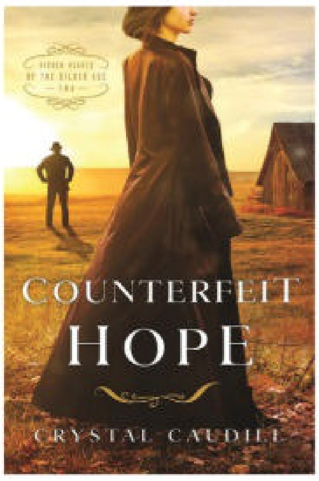
BETHANY HOUSE

The Metropolitan Affair by Jocelyn Green (Mar. 14, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-7642-3963-2).

Childhood friends Laura Westlake, an Egyptology expert, and detective Joe Caravello reunite as adults to hunt down the culprit behind a spate of artifact forgeries in 1920s Manhattan.

KREGEL

Counterfeit Hope by Crystal Caudill (Feb. 14, $15.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-8254-4741-9). "Lightning" Lu Thorne—so nicknamed for her pickpocketing skills—dreams of fleeing her small town and criminal family, but after her decision to serve as an informant backfires, she must work with secret service operative Andrew Darlington for any hope of escape.



THOMAS NELSON

Famous for a Living by Melissa Ferguson (May 16, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-8407-0248-7). After influencer Cat Cranwell is shunned by her online community because of a misguided app partnership, she lands a job as the social media strategist for a small national park, where she meets a rugged ranger.

PARACLETE

Bastille Day by Gregory Todd Garrett (Apr. 4, $19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64060-751-4). In Paris, a journalist scarred by memories of the Iraq war runs into the Saudi woman he'd fallen for a decade before—and he's dismayed to learn she is arranged to marry a sheikh.

REVELL

After the Shadows by Amanda Cabot (Mar. 21, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-8007-4064-1). Shortly after Emily Leland returns to her Texas hometown, her father dies suspiciously. She and schoolteacher Craig Ferguson work to unravel the mystery, which may relate to a pattern of recent accidents around town.

The Sound of Light by Sarah Sundin (Feb. 7, $17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-8007-3638-5). In WWII-era German-occupied Copenhagen, physicist Else Jensen and Baron Henrik Ahlfeldt get involved in the resistance movement and grow close as boardinghouse roommates—though each is unaware of the other's secret.

TYNDALE

Double the Lies by Patricia Raybon (Feb. 7, $26.99, ISBN 978-1-4964-5842-1). In 1924, amateur detective Annalee Spain works to solve a mystery involving a woman's death and her pastor boyfriend's disappearance, all while evading the Klan-infiltrated police force.

Indigo Isle by T.I. Lowe (June 6, $25.99, ISBN 978-1-4964-6559-7). When Hollywood location scout Sonny Bates returns to her home state of South Carolina for a shoot, she discovers a private island near Charleston and a reclusive owner who's not eager to heed the production company's requests.

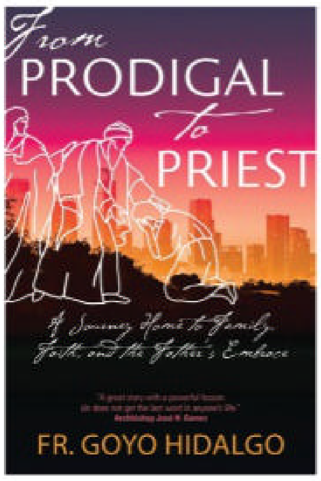
WATERBROOK

The Tapestry of Grace by Kim Vogel Sawyer (Apr. 18, $17 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-593-19438-6). A women's benevolent society aims to help a reserved Mennonite widower care for his young children in this historical romance.

Nonfiction

AVE MARIA

From Prodigal to Priest: A Journey Home to Family, Faith, and the Father's Embrace by Goyo Hidalgo (Feb. 24, $14.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64680-212-8). A former hard partier is awakened to God when he sees John Paul II's televised funeral mass, setting him on the road to priesthood.



BAKER

Listen to Your Day: The Life-Changing Practice of Paying Attention by Paul Angone (Apr. 4, $17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5409-0071-5) outlines ways to move past "inattentional blindness" to better focus on personal priorities, daily life, and God.

BASIC

The Word: How We Translate the Bible—and Why It Matters by John Barton (May 2, $32, ISBN 978-1-5416-0368-4) delves into the challenges of scriptural translation, including questions of literary style, inclusive language, and "literal" versus "free" translation.

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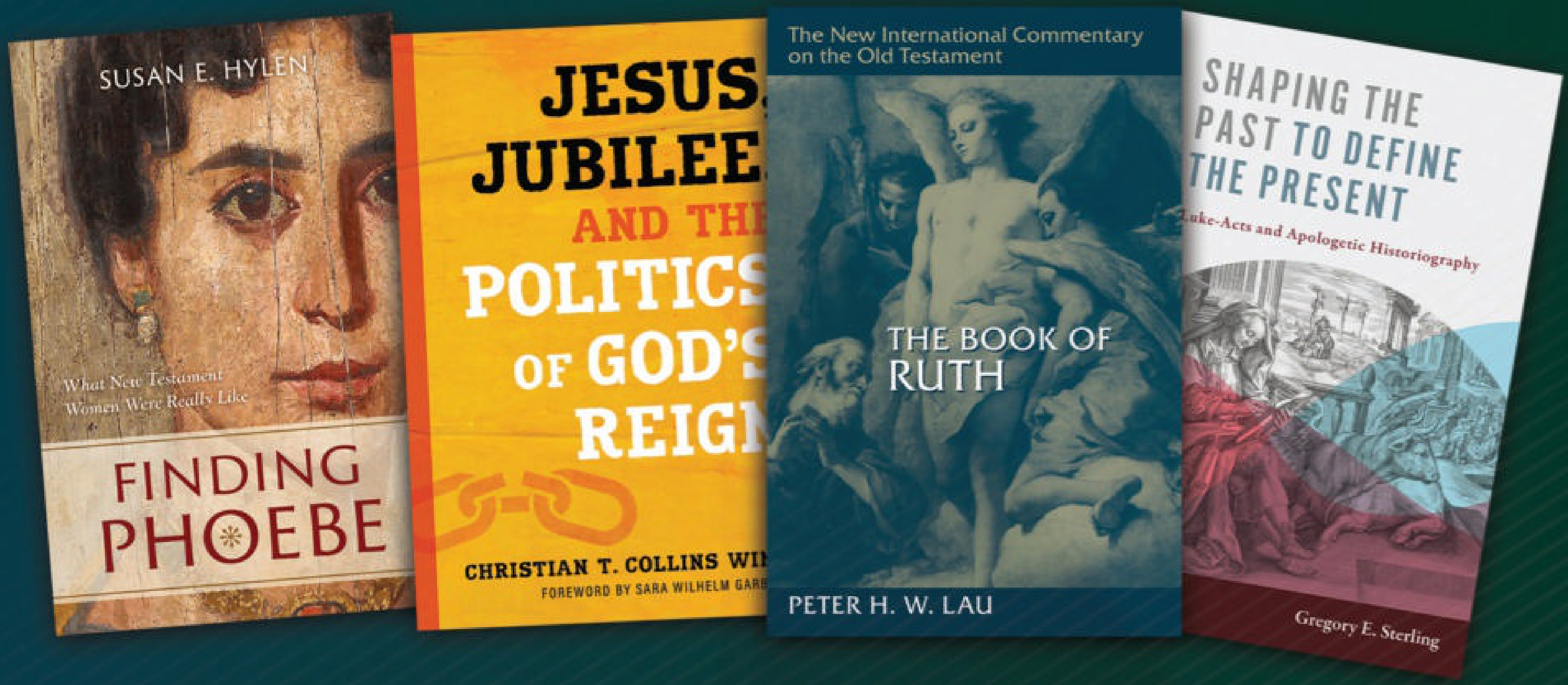
The Beauty of the Hebrew Letter: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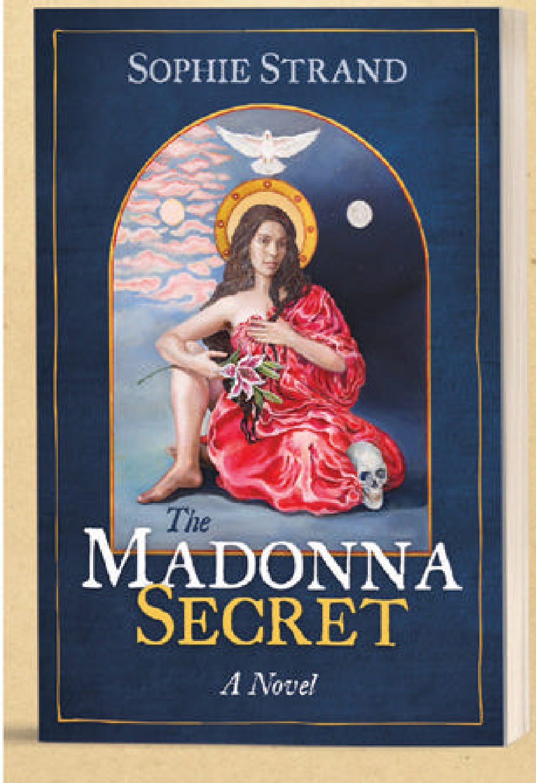

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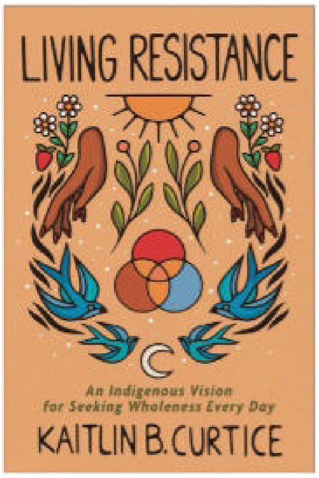
From Scrolls to Graffiti by Izzy Pludwinski (May 20, $50, ISBN 978-1-68458-146-7) traces the calligraphic evolution of the aleph-bet, surveying ancient inscriptions, Torah scrolls, and street art.



BRAZOS

Living Resistance: An Indigenous Vision for Seeking Wholeness Every Day by Kaitlin B. Curtice (Mar. 7, $21.99, ISBN 978-1-58743-571-3) suggests methods of individual and communal resistance to build a more connected world.

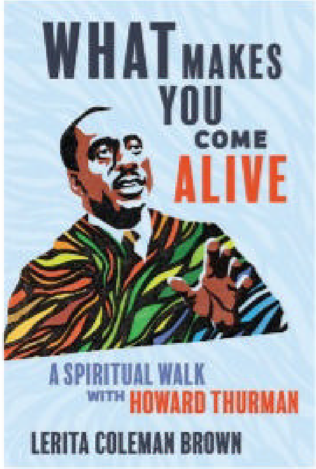
Sober Spirituality: The Joy of a Mindful Relationship with Alcohol by Erin Jean Warde (Apr. 18, $18.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-58743-567-6). An Episcopal priest embarks on a quest to quit drinking, and dispenses advice to Christians wishing to do the same.

BROADLEAF

My Body and Other Crumbling Empires: Lessons for Healing in a World That Is Sick by Lyndsey Medford (Mar. 7, $24.99, ISBN 978-1-5064-8431-0). A woman recounts her struggles with an autoimmune disease, and uses sickness as a metaphor to examine ailing social, medical, and economic systems.

The Spirituality of Grief: Ten Practices for Those Who Remain by Fran Tilton Shelton (Apr. 18, $17.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5064-8310-8) draws from various religious traditions to suggest ways of coping with mourning.

What Makes You Come Alive: A Spiritual Walk with Howard Thurman by Lerita Coleman Brown (Feb. 7, $24.99, ISBN 978-1-5064-7465-6) tracks the civil rights leader's life and touches on his role as Martin Luther King Jr.'s spiritual advisor, encounters with Mahatma Gandhi, and experiences in the Jim Crow South.


WHAT MAKES YOU COME ALIVE
A SPIRITUAL WALK WITH HOWARD THURMAN
LERITA COLEMAN BROWN

CONVERGENT

Sensual Faith: The Art of Coming Home to Your Body by Lyvonne Briggs (Mar. 21, $26, ISBN 978-0-593-44319-4) encourages women to develop sex-positive attitudes toward their bodies and fortify their spirituality in the process.

DK

Sikhs: A Story of a People, Their Faith, and Culture (Apr. 25, $50, ISBN 978-0-7440-7752-0) looks at the Sikh religion, which has 30 million adherents, and its history, traditions, and egalitarian values.

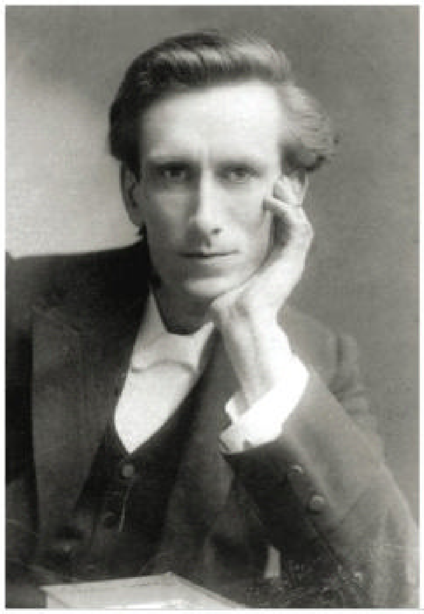
EERDMANS

Beyond Immanence: The Theological Vision of Kierkegaard and Barth by Alan J. and Andrew B. Torrance (May 25, $49.99, ISBN 978-0-8028-6803-9) dissects the philosophers' belief in a Christocentric faith free from political manipulation and state influence.

Faith and Fake News: A Guide to Consuming Information Wisely by Rachel I. Wightman (May 30, $19.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-8028-8245-5) explores how Christians can engage responsibly with online news sources while honoring their religious principles.

Oral Roberts and the Rise of the Prosperity Gospel by Jonathan Root (Apr. 20, $26 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-8028-7727-7) chronicles the televangelist's life, from his Depression-era childhood to the finance-based theology that brought him fame.

QAnon, Chaos, and the Cross: Christianity and Conspiracy Theories, edited by Michael W. Austin and Gregory L. Bock (May 23, $24.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-8028-8265-3), investigates the appeal of conspiracy theories in faith communities, and proposes Christian values to chart a better path forward.



TIMELESS WISDOM MADE MODERN:

Spotlight on Oswald Chambers

An updated version of the author and preacher's classic *My Utmost for His Highest* from Our Daily Bread Publishing is set to reach a new generation of readers

My Utmost for His Highest, a daily devotional written by Scottish preacher and WWI chaplain Oswald Chambers before his death in 1917, has sold more than 15 million copies and changed the course of countless lives since its initial publication in 1927. Today, the classic work remains both a bestseller and a powerful source of spiritual nourishment—and a newly updated edition will introduce Chambers to even more readers. Our Daily Bread Publishing is releasing a 90-day hardcover gift version of *My Utmost for His Highest: Modern Classic Edition* in April, to be followed in October by a full 365-day version of the devotional.

Macy Halford, who was tasked with bringing *My Utmost for His Highest* up to date, relied on an intimate knowledge of the book as well as her background in writing and editing during the revision process. Halford's experience includes working at the *New Yorker* as an editor, and her first book, *My Utmost: A Devotional Memoir*, detailed how Chambers's writing helped shape her into the Christian she is today. The memoir also offers a history of Chambers's life and legacy. Halford's work on *My Utmost for His Highest: Modern Classic Edition* involved making changes to the language as well as using the New International Version Bible text, and the Oswald Chambers Publications Association Ltd. has authorized all revisions.

"I wouldn't have felt comfortable taking it on," Halford says, "had I not also spent years immersing myself in the life of Oswald Chambers and familiarizing myself with his thinking and theology." Editing decisions were guided by Halford's desire to make *My Utmost for His Highest* more understandable and accessible to all audiences. "*Utmost* is not an easy book; it has great power to stun with its ideas, but these ideas come at you at an angle, often in language you've never heard before," Halford says. "One of the main goals for this project was to add context to passages in *Utmost* where Oswald's meaning wasn't entirely clear."

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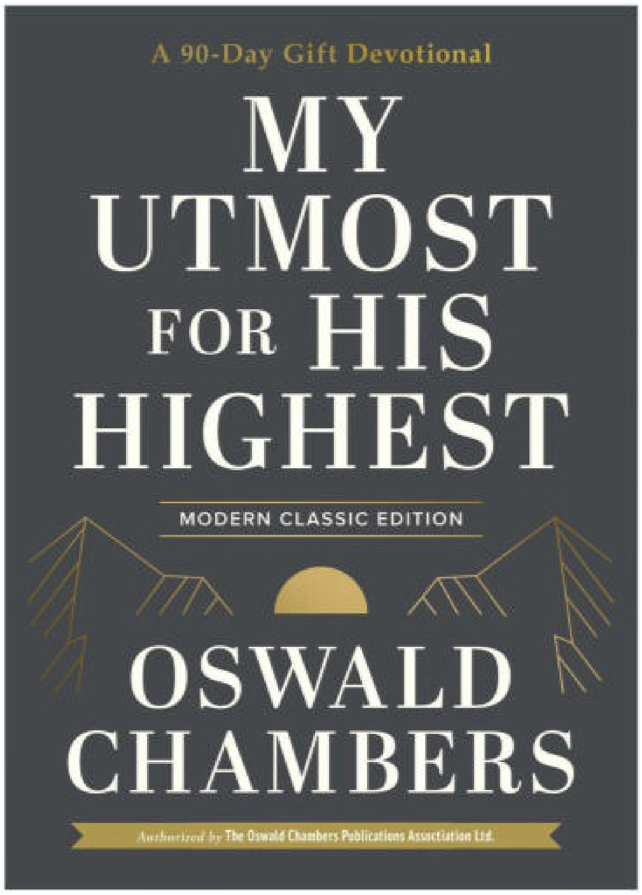
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MY UTMOST FOR HIS HIGHEST
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Readability and context became priorities over some of what Halford calls "Oswaldisms," or the specific phrases and vocabulary originally used by Oswald. Some phrases do remain in the book, however, and are included in a glossary. These include "amateur providence," which is a person who tries to fill the role of Jesus Christ in another's life as a self-declared essential spiritual guide.

Despite Chambers's complex ideas and Victorian writing style, his vision of Christianity and the Christian life is clear and simple. It changed the way Halford viewed her own faith while growing up in a Texas church "where creeds, ideologies, religion, and politics were all mashed up," she says. "It was extremely confusing! *Utmost* was clarity. It still is. It cuts right through the noise and confusion that, as Oswald puts it, crowd out the life of faith inside us—all the noise of our various ideologies and opinions and, again as Oswald puts it, our habit of 'using religion as a higher kind of culture.'"

> “*My Utmost for His Highest* contains multitudes; I want to invite readers to explore them and, hopefully, to gain as much from them as I have.
>
> **— Macy Halford** ”

Halford knows that Chambers's devotional has the ability to draw readers closer to God, and she expects that with the *Modern Classic Edition*, one can read it without feeling lost. "We are always in danger of forgetting, as Oswald puts it, the 'great fundamental truths,'" she says. "*My Utmost for His Highest* contains multitudes; I want to invite readers to explore them and, hopefully, to gain as much from them as I have."

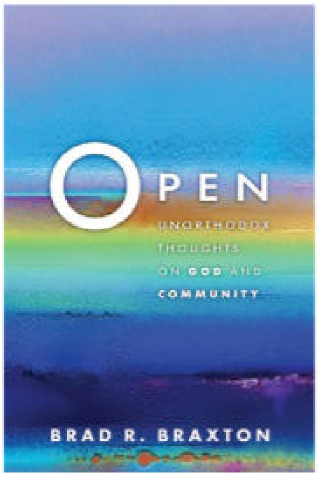
FAITHWORDS

Breakthrough: The Power of Disruptive Thinking by T.D. Jakes (May 9, $27, ISBN 978-1-5460-0400-4). A pastor and media entrepreneur lays out tools to turn original but against-the-grain ideas into reality.

Disobedient God: Trusting a God Who Goes Off-Script by Albert Tate (Apr. 25, $26, ISBN 978-1-5460-0056-3) discusses how and why to maintain a steadfast belief in God during moments of difficulty and religious doubt.

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

Parenting Gen Z: Guiding Your Child Through a Hostile Culture by Jason Jimenez (June 6, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64607-007-7) provides a roadmap for Christian parents to deal with issues such as depression, pornography, sex, and abortion.


OPEN
UNORTHODOX THOUGHTS ON GOD AND COMMUNITY
BRAD R. BRAXTON

FORTRESS

Open: Unorthodox Thoughts on God and Community by Brad R. Braxton (Apr. 4, $24 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5064-8881-3) advocates for pluralism in church communities and discusses reparations, LGBTQ equality, and environmental justice.

Sacred Pregnancy: Birth, Motherhood, and the Quest for Spiritual Community by Ann W. Duncan (Apr. 25, $28 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5064-8556-0) examines the intersection of reproduction and Christian faith, casting pregnancy and birth as holy rites of passage.

HAMPTON ROADS

Meister Eckhart's Book of Darkness & Light: Meditations on the Path of the Wayless Way by Jon M. Sweeney, Mark S. Burrows, and Meister Eckhart (Mar. 1, $16.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64297-045-6) highlights the spiritual insights of the Christian mystic and his comments on finding God through darkness.

HARPERONE

God the Bestseller: How One Editor Transformed American Religion a Book at a Time by Stephen Prothero (Mar. 14, $29.99, ISBN 978-0-06-246404-0) recounts Eugene Exman's tenure at Harper, during which he published culture-shifting works by Harry Emerson Fosdick, Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Day, and others. 35,000-copy announced first printing.

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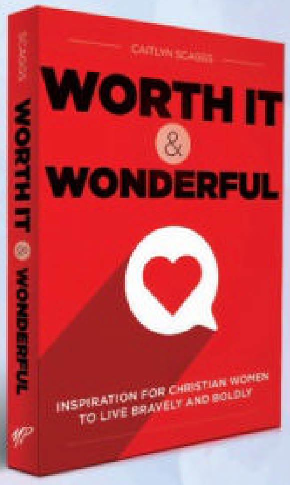
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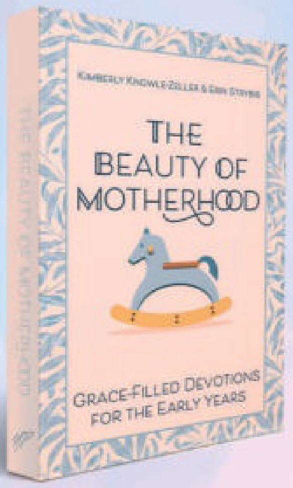
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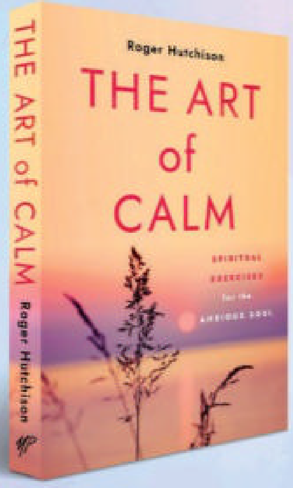
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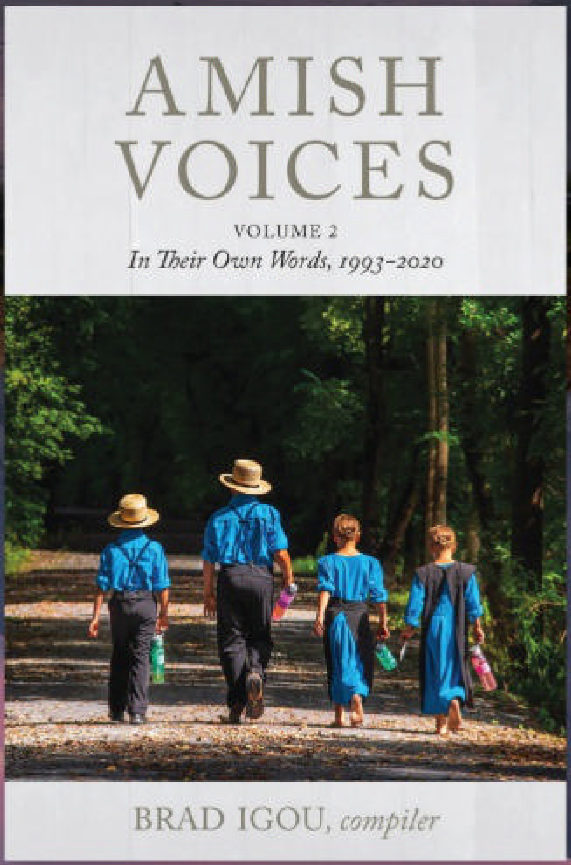
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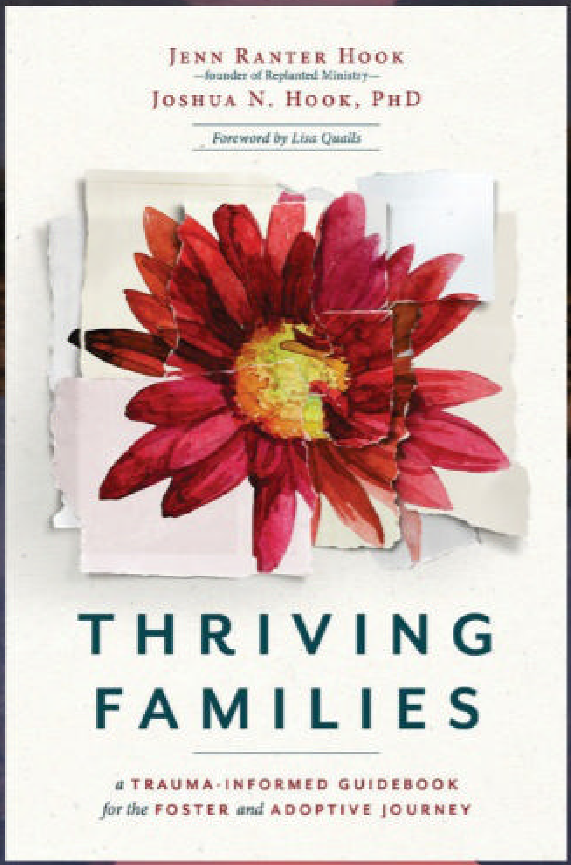
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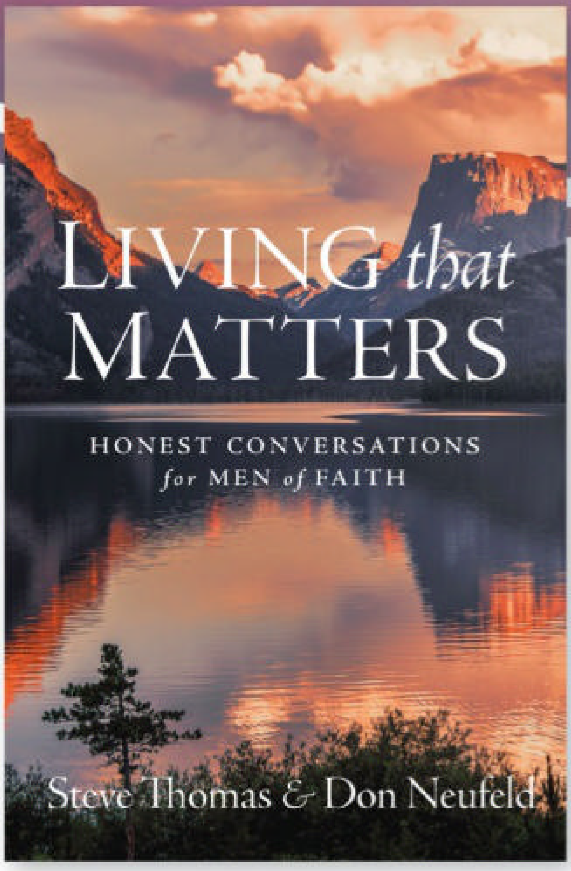
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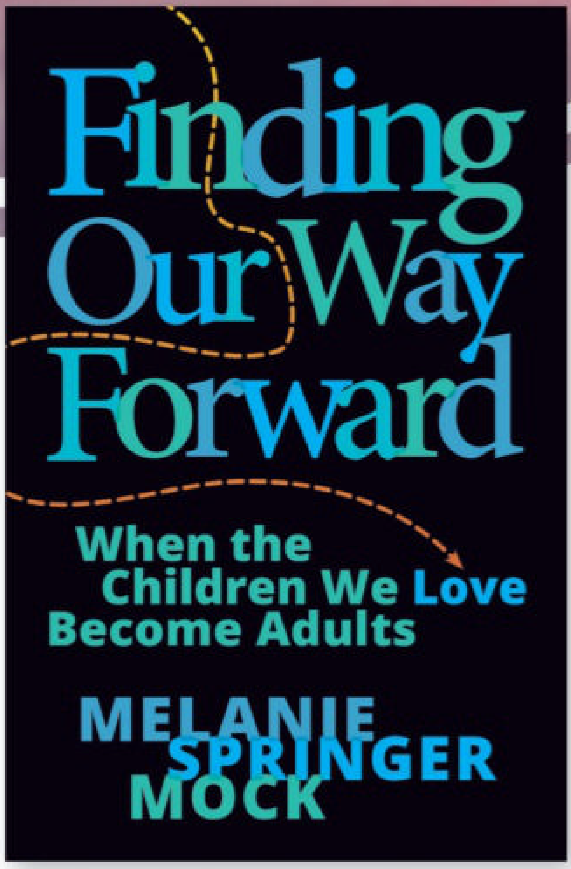
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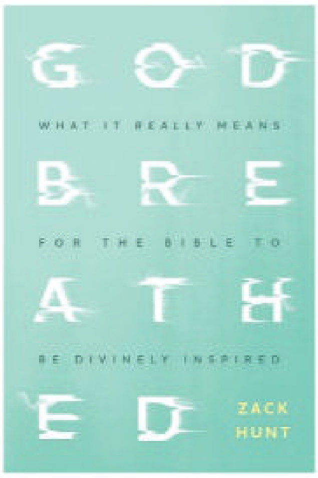
HERALD

Godbreathed: What It Really Means for the Bible to Be Divinely Inspired by Zack Hunt (May 9, $18.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5138-1183-3) invites Christians to look beyond literal ideas of scripture in order to access God's deeper spiritual truths.


GOD
BREATHED
WHAT IT REALLY MEANS
FOR THE BIBLE TO
BE DIVINELY INSPIRED
ZACK HUNT

Stuck Together: The Hope of Christian Witness in a Polarized World by J. Nelson Kraybill (Apr. 11, $18.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5138-1064-5) explains how believers can use scriptural wisdom to seek common ground with those with whom they disagree.

HODDER FAITH

Finding the Peacemakers: A Journey of Faith from the Mines of Chile to the Deserts of the Middle East by Dan Morrice (May 2, $14.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5293-5819-3) sets out on a global quest to find those forging peace in extreme environments, including war-torn nations and disaster zones, and extracts insights on using Christian faith to further peace.

Woman Remembered: Jesus' Female Disciples by Joan Taylor (June 13, $21.99, ISBN 978-1-5293-7259-5) highlights biblical women and complicates their depictions in scripture, religious art, and elsewhere.

IVP

Non-toxic Masculinity: Recovering Healthy Male Sexuality by Zachary Wagner (Apr. 18, $18 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5140-0502-6) contends that purity culture is harmful, and puts forth a new version of Christian male sexuality rooted in empathy and selflessness.

On Getting Out of Bed: The Burden and Gift of Living by Alan Noble (Apr. 18, $20, ISBN 978-1-5140-0443-2) opens up about fighting depression, anxiety, and other emotional challenges through small but important daily choices.

IVP ACADEMIC

Being God's Image: Why Creation Still Matters by Carmen Joy Imes (May 30, $22 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-5140-0020-5) analyzes creationism narratives in the book of Genesis and elsewhere, and investigates what it means to be "made in God's image."

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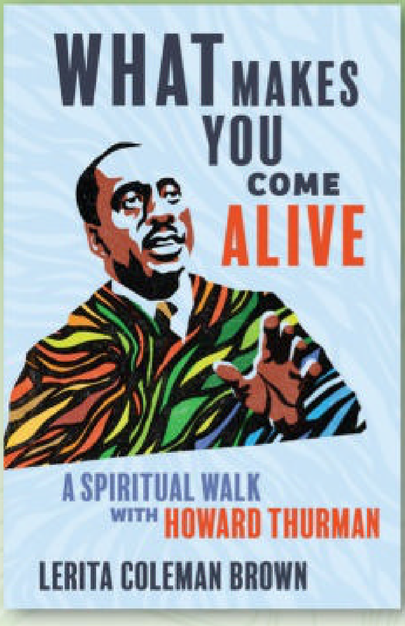
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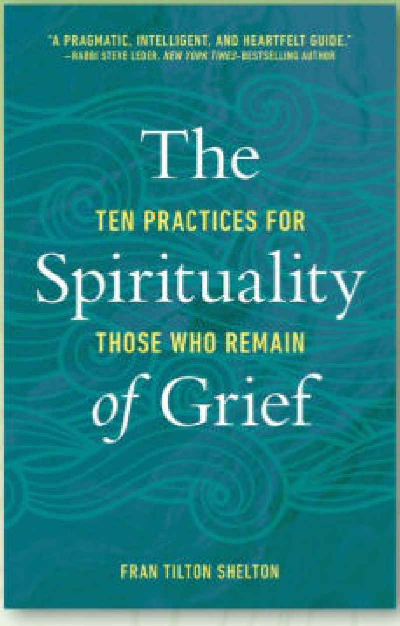
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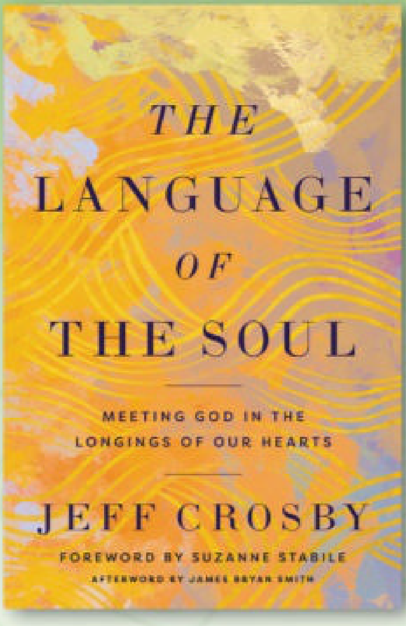
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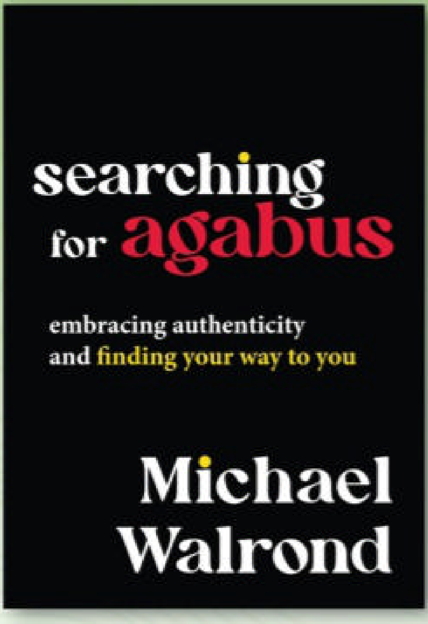
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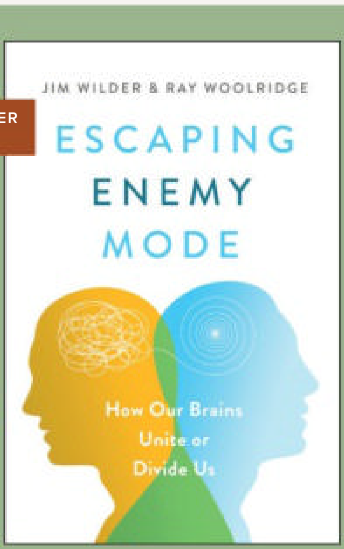
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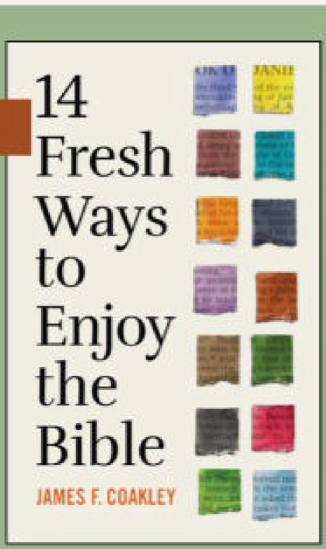
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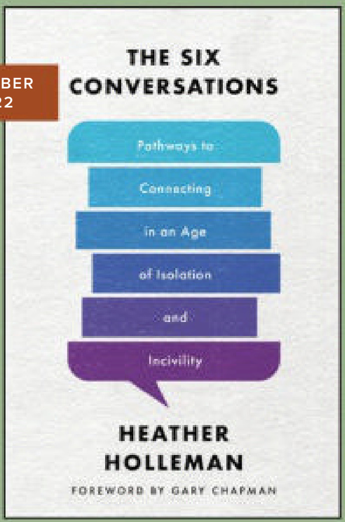
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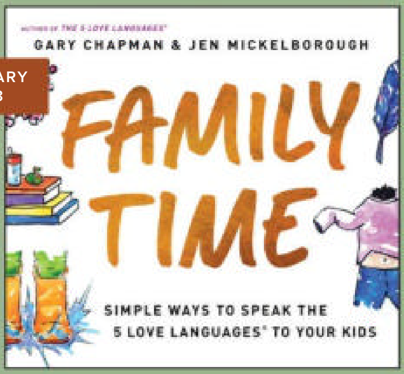
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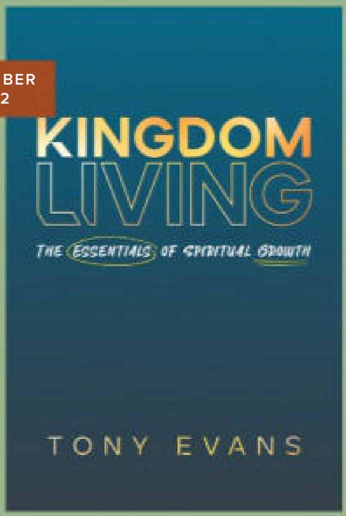
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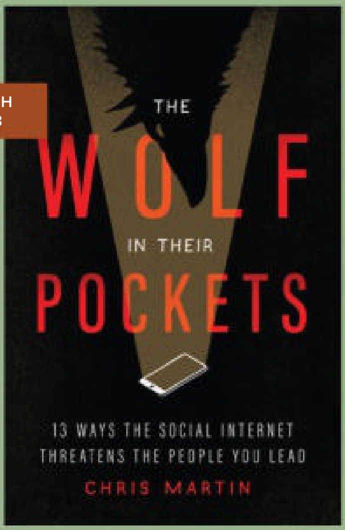
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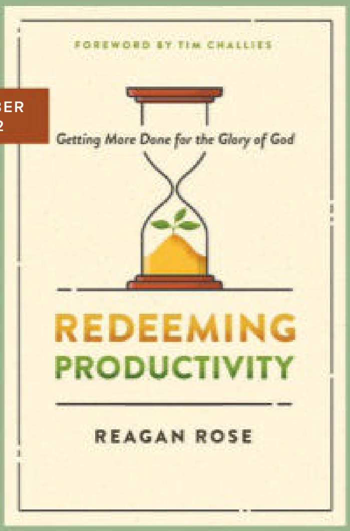
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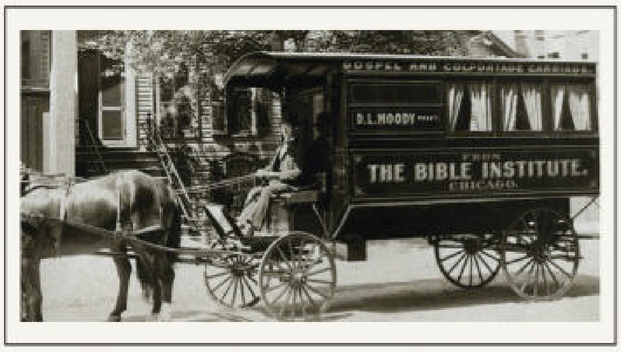
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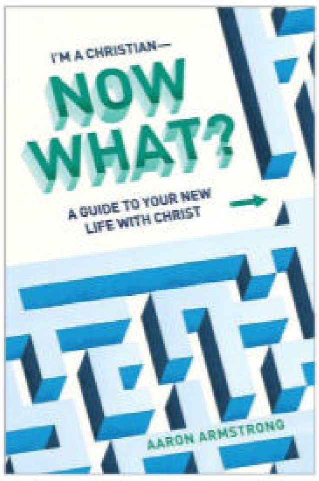
After Coming Out of the Closet and Evangelicalism by Brandon Flanery (June 7, $18.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-957687-12-4) considers the personal and religious questions that arose after the author came out as gay within an Evangelical community.

LEAFWOOD

Overlooked by Whitney Akin (Apr. 11, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-68426-192-5) tackles the human need for attention in a social media-obsessed society, and suggests a closer relationship with God as a solution.

LEXHAM

After Dispensationalism: Reading the Bible for the End of the World by Brian P. Irwin (May 3, $29.99, ISBN 978-1-68359-681-3) engages the history and beliefs of a controversial end-times theory that contends Jesus will return twice.


I'M A CHRISTIAN—
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A GUIDE TO YOUR NEW LIFE WITH CHRIST
AARON ARMSTRONG

I'm a Christian—Now What? A Guide to Your New Life with Christ by Aaron Armstrong (Mar. 1, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-68359-671-4) provides recent converts advice on reading the Bible, praying, finding the right church, rethinking sex and marriage, and disagreeing with other Christians.

LITURGICAL

Living Christ by Peter Feldmeier (Apr. 15, $29.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-8146-6821-4) offers a guide to reading and interpreting the Gospels, and contends that doing so is essential to fully understand the texts and to know God.

LOYOLA

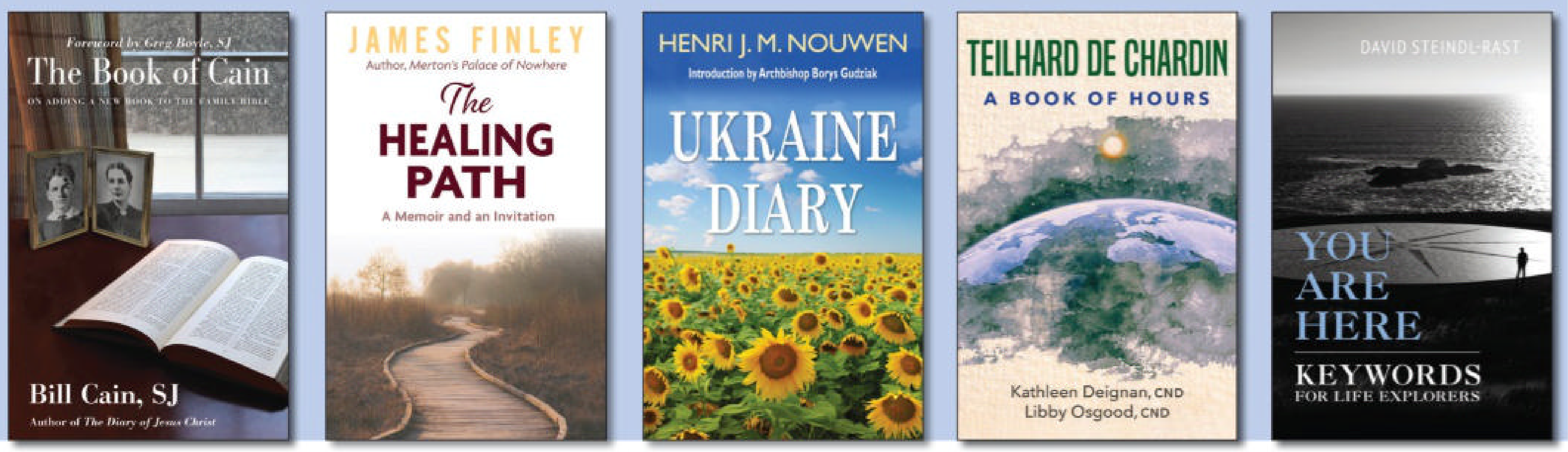
Ask a Catholic Parent by Julianne Stanz (June 6, $16.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-8294-5517-5) offers spiritual guidance to parents raising children according to Catholic principles.

MOREHOUSE

He Called Me Sister: A True Story of Finding Humanity on Death Row by Suzanne Craig Robertson (Feb. 21, $29.95, ISBN 978-1-64065-595-9) recounts the author's 15-year friendship with Cecil Johnson, who was incarcerated on death row.

MULTNOMAH

Beautiful Union: How God's Vision for Sex Points Us to the Good, Unlocks the True, and (Sort of) Explains Everything by Joshua Ryan Butler (Apr. 25, $18 trade paper,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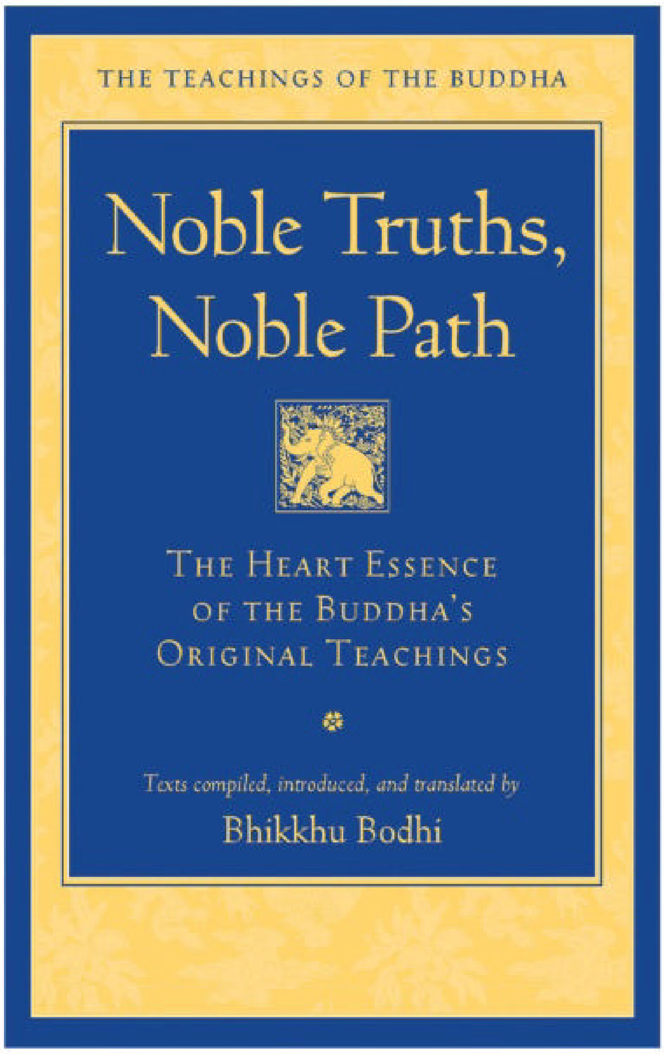
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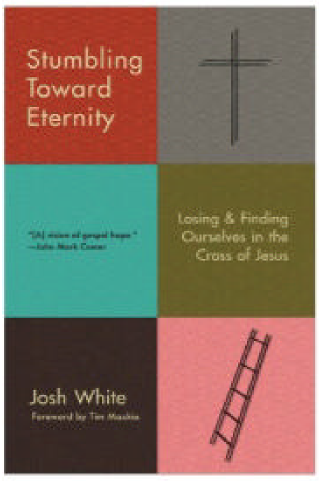
ISBN 978-0-593-44503-7) details a philosophy of sex rooted in Christian theology.

Please, Sorry, Thanks: The Three Words That Change Everything by Mark Batterson (Apr. 4, $22, ISBN 978-0-593-19279-5) recommends using the "three magic words" in daily life to strengthen personal gratitude, humility, and relationships.

Stumbling Toward Eternity: Losing and Finding Ourselves in the Cross of Jesus by Josh White (Feb. 28, $17 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-593-19393-8). A pastor reexamines the cross as an emblem of Jesus's humility and sacrifice, and endeavors to use these insights to help believers find meaningful faith.


Stumbling Toward Eternity
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Josh White

NAVPRESS

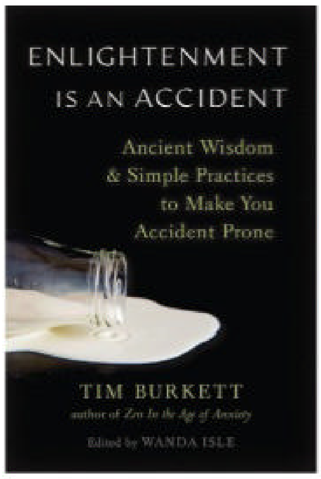
Ordinary Discipleship: How God Wires Us for the Adventure of Transformation by Jessie Cruickshank (May 9, $15.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64158-732-7) draws on scripture and brain science to frame spiritual growth as a rewarding quest into the unknown.

NORTH ATLANTIC

Refuge in the Storm: Buddhist Approaches to Compassionate Crisis Care, edited by Nathan Jishin Michon (June 6, $18.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-62317-809-3), outlines spiritual practices to help individuals, communities, families, and the care providers who support them during a crisis.

SHAMBHALA

Enlightenment Is an Accident: Ancient Wisdom and Simple Practices to Make You Accident Prone by Tim Burkett, edited by Wanda Isle (May 16, $19.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64547-135-6), plumbs the paradoxes of transcendence, among them that it can only be achieved when one stops trying to reach it.


ENLIGHTENMENT IS AN ACCIDENT
Ancient Wisdom & Simple Practices to Make You Accident Prone
TIM BURKETT
Edited by WANDA ISLE

The Mysterion: Rumi and the Secret of Becoming Fully Human by Kabir Helminski (Apr. 4, $21.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64547-144-8) draws on the insights of 13th-century poet and mystic Rumi to underline the importance of cultivating divine potential in order to be more human.

Turning Words: Transformative Encounters with Buddhist Teachers by Hozan Alan Senauke (Mar. 7, $18.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64547-131-8). A Zen priest shares the life-changing phrases of friends and Buddhist teachers, including the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh, to deliver insights into faith and social action.

SIMON & SCHUSTER

Armageddon by Bart D. Ehrman (Mar. 21, $27.99, ISBN 978-198214-799-0) analyzes the Book of Revelations and critiques popular interpretations of the end times.

TYNDALE

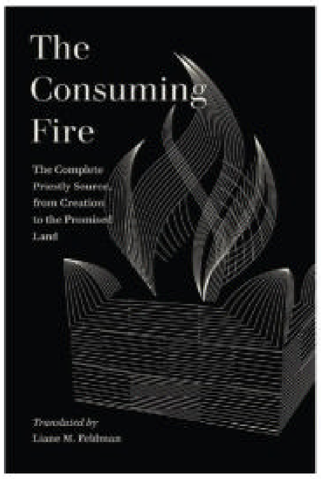
All My Knotted-Up Life: A Memoir by Beth Moore (Feb. 21, $27.99, ISBN 978-1-4964-7267-0). Moore, a bible teacher and founder of Living Proof Ministries, traces the winding path of her belief and reflects on the familial, religious, and personal challenges she met along the way.

ULYSSES

Spell Jars for the Modern Witch by Minerva Siegel (May 30, $16.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-1-64604-495-5) lays out guidance for sealed-container spellcrafting, including spells for financial abundance, nightmare protection, and successful job hunting.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

The Consuming Fire: The Complete Priestly Source, from Creation to the Promised Land by Liane Feldman (Apr. 11, $19.95 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-520-38365-4) provides the full text of one of the four foundational sources of the Old Testament, which describes the origins of the Jewish people and their relationship with God.


The Consuming Fire
The Complete Priestly Source, from Creation to the Promised Land
Translated by Liane M. Feldman

UNIV. OF NOTRE DAME

Touch the Wounds: On Suffering, Trust, and Transformation by Tomáš Halík, trans. by Gerald Turner (Mar. 1, $25, ISBN 978-0-268-20489-1) uses Jesus's wounds as a metaphor to reflect on Christian concepts of suffering.

UNIV. OF PENNSYLVANIA

A Life of Psalms in Jewish Late Antiquity by A.J. Berkovitz (June 20, $59.95, ISBN 978-1-5128-2418-6) explores the Psalter and how late ancient Jews engaged with it, whether interpreting it exegetically or singing it as liturgy.

W

Midlife Battle Cry: Redefining the Mighty Second Half by Dawn Barton (May 9, $18.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-7852-9482-5) argues that improved self-knowledge in middle age can make room for personal fulfillment and a more meaningful relationship with God.

Waiting in Hope: 31 Reflections for Walking with God Through Infertility by Jennifer Hesse, Kelley Ramsey (Apr. 11, $24.99, ISBN 978-0-7852-9038-4) draws on a mix of scriptural wisdom, testimonies, and personal narratives to help women

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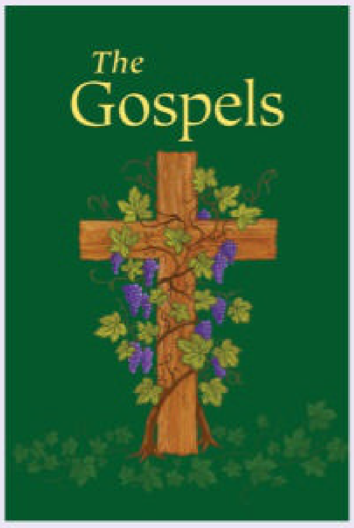

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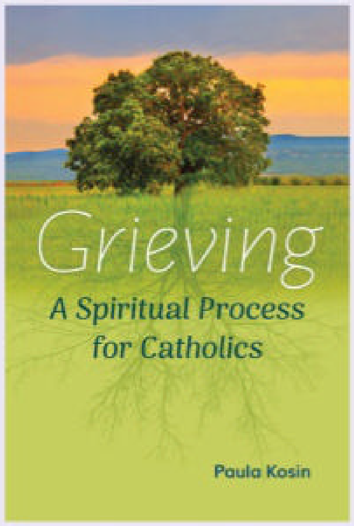

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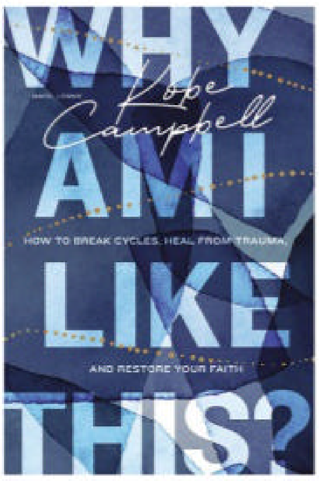
Why Am I Like This? How to Break Cycles, Heal from Trauma, and Restore Your Faith by Kobe Campbell (Apr. 4, $18.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-7852-9642-3) calls for believers to examine unaddressed emotional wounds and personal truths to accept God's healing.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WATERBROOK

Hope Is the First Dose: A Treatment Plan for Recovering from Trauma, Tragedy, and Other Massive Things by W. Lee Warren (July 25, $26, ISBN 978-0-593-44539-6). A neurosurgeon reflects on the death of his 19-year-old son and the godly love that helped him endure.

WISDOM

Noble Truths, Noble Path: The Heart Essence of the Buddha's Original Teachings by Bhikkhu Bodhi (Feb. 14, $44.95, ISBN 978-1-61429-798-7) surveys Buddhism's eightfold path for insights on liberation.

ZONDERVAN

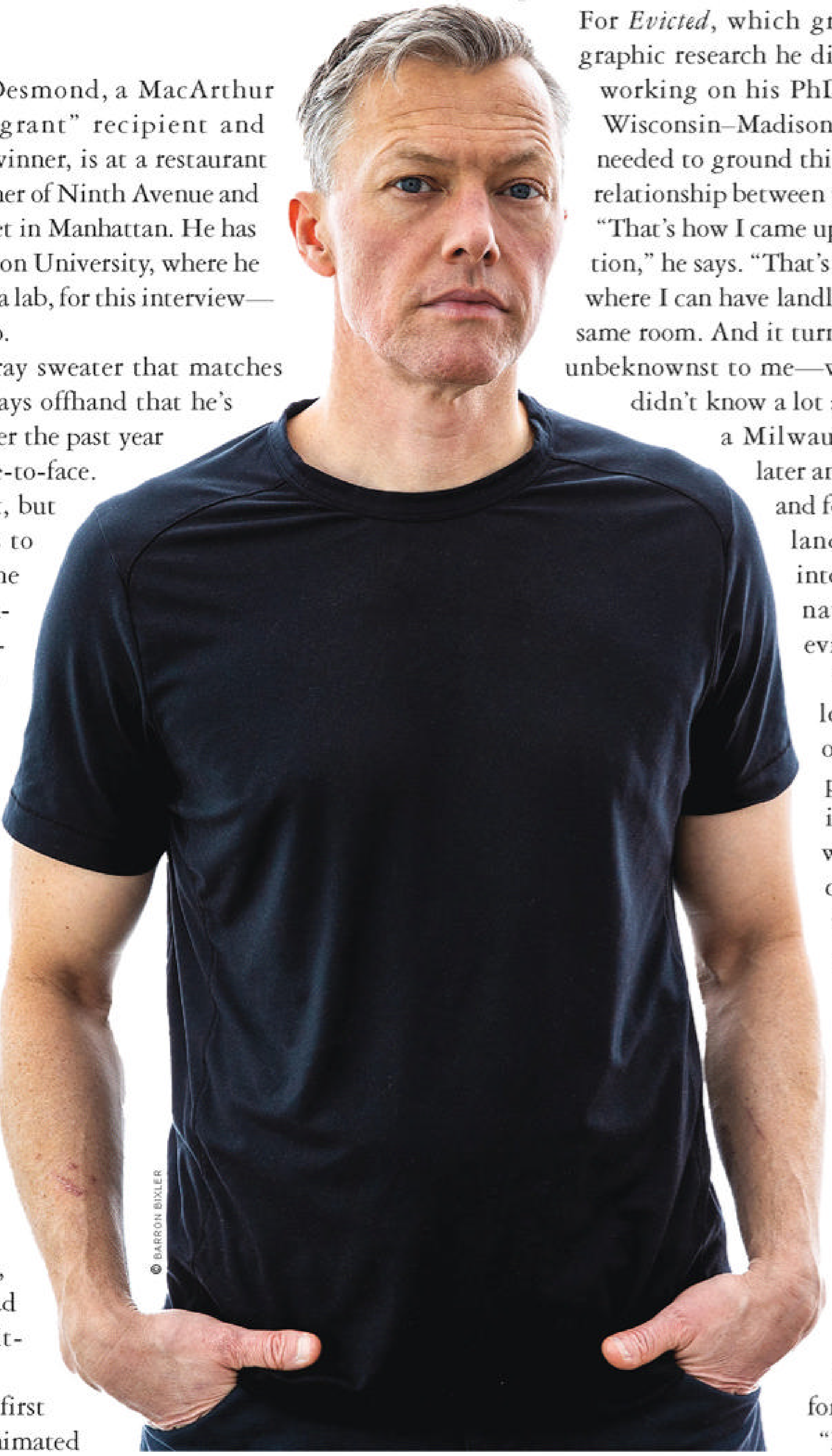
The Anxiety Opportunity: How Worry is the Doorway to Your Best Self by Curtis Chang (May 16, $18.99 trade paper, ISBN 978-0-310-36728-4) reframes anxiety as a tool to promote spiritual growth when transformed into productive energy.

Finish Line: Dispelling Fear, Finding Peace, and Preparing for the End of Your Life by Robert Wolgemuth (Mar. 7, $27.99, ISBN 978-0-310-36489-4) offers biblical wisdom to inform a host of end-of-life considerations, including drawing up wills, straightening out finances, blessing others, and caring for those left behind. ■

Made in America

In his new book, Pulitzer winner Matthew Desmond argues that the U.S. could end poverty—if those who benefit from it cared to

By Andy Kifer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Matthew Desmond, a MacArthur "genius grant" recipient and Pulitzer winner, is at a restaurant at the corner of Ninth Avenue and 25th Street in Manhattan. He has taken the train up from Princeton University, where he teaches sociology and runs a data lab, for this interview—something he didn't need to do.

Smiling easily in a light gray sweater that matches his silvering hair, Desmond says offhand that he's been on so many video calls over the past year that he was eager to meet face-to-face. It's a simple enough statement, but in this case it offers a clue as to what makes Desmond tick: he seems to possess a powerful intuition that the best way to understand anything is to encounter it firsthand.

Desmond was catapulted from promising young professor (he won his MacArthur in 2015) to one of the country's leading authorities on poverty with the 2016 publication of his bestselling *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*.

In May, Crown will release his next book, *Poverty, by America*, in which Desmond takes a big swing at diagnosing why poverty exists in this country. His conclusion: we could, as a society, alleviate poverty—if only we had the stomach to give up benefitting from poverty ourselves.

Why is there poverty in the first place? It's a question that has animated Desmond's work since graduate school. "There was something about the poverty debate that was bugging me," he says. "There are all these books about poverty, and I started asking, Where's the tension in the story? Who is the bad guy? Is there a bad guy? Are there really 38 million people in this country who are poor, and it's no one's fault?"

For *Evicted*, which grew out of the ethnographic research he did in Milwaukee while working on his PhD at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Desmond realized he needed to ground this abstract question in a relationship between two real human beings. "That's how I came upon writing about eviction," he says. "That's an ethnographic scene, where I can have landlords and tenants in the same room. And it turned out that eviction—unbeknownst to me—was something we just didn't know a lot about." He moved into a Milwaukee trailer park, and later an urban rooming house, and followed 10 tenants and landlords (eight made it into the final book) as they navigated poverty and eviction.

Writing about landlords and tenants came out of a need to see a problem firsthand, but it also reflected a keen writerly instinct for character and narrative tension. Desmond's academic adviser had long encouraged him to write for an audience beyond the academy (years earlier, Desmond had turned his master's thesis into a book titled *On the Firelines*), and soon Desmond was looking to turn his fieldwork in Milwaukee into a book for the trade.

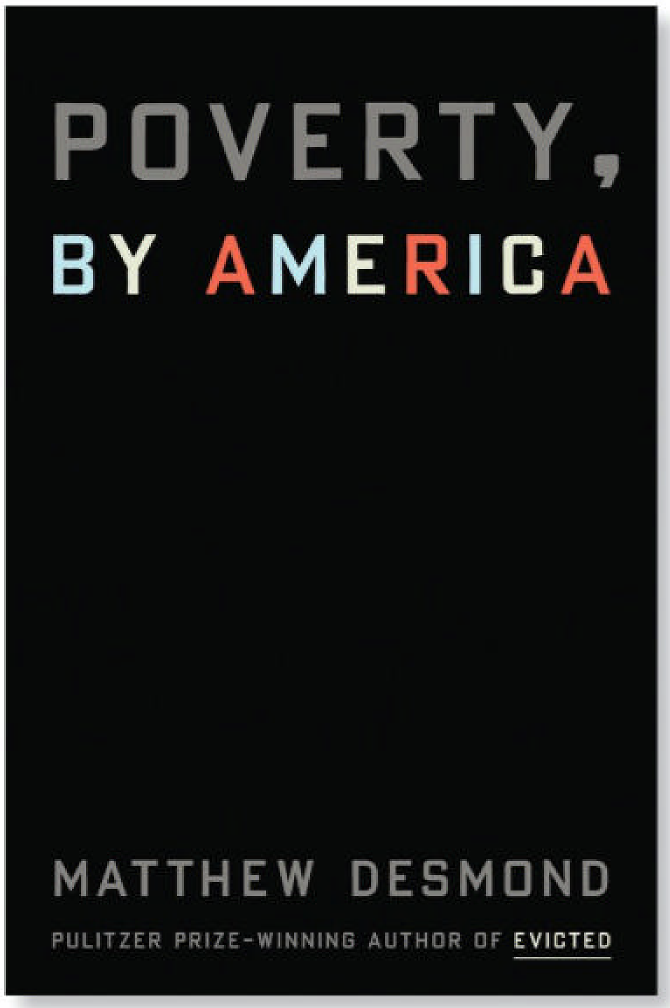
"I met a lot of agents," he

recalls, "and a lot of the conversations went like this: 'Let's trim this paragraph and we'll go to market. Let's fix this thing and we'll go to market.' Power lunch agents." Then he met Jill Kneerim, at what was then Kneerim, Williams, & Bloom. "Jill was just like, 'This is crap. This doesn't make any sense. This just isn't working at all.' She was like another dissertation adviser. She just handed me my ass all the time."

Kneerim sold *Evicted* to Crown at auction, but Desmond's work was far from over. The field work itself had been grueling—long days with his subjects, followed by long nights typing up his notes—and the process of writing the book wasn't any easier.

"I got invited to give a talk in Paris," Desmond says, "and I brought all this butcher paper there, and I had a coding mechanism for 'this is exactly where this is in the field notes.' I wrote all these themes, and then I had this other piece of butcher paper where I wrote all the ideas: Where am I going to talk about domestic violence? Where am I going to tell you about the racial disparities in eviction? And then I just connected the people to the ideas, and that's how the book took shape."

After *Evicted* came out, Desmond's life changed dramatically. The attention, praise, and awards were gratifying, but he kept thinking of the relationships he'd formed with his subjects in Milwaukee. A Pulitzer was great, but how was it going to help Arleen—perhaps the most memorable character in *Evicted*—get out of poverty?



Desmond channeled his discomfort into action. "Publishing a book is step three of making a difference," he says. "There's all this follow-through work that was new to me." That work brought him into a bigger national conversation about how to alleviate poverty, this time with policymakers who were actually in positions to effect change. He also started the Eviction Lab at Princeton, which compiled the first comprehensive data set of evictions in the U.S.

But eventually Desmond found himself thinking back to graduate school, and the question he used to ask himself about the origins of poverty: "I remember in my dissertation defense there was a scholar who asked this question, 'What's your theory of poverty?' I should have an answer to that." Perhaps this time he could try to tackle the question not as an ethnographer and sociologist, but as a public intellectual.

Poverty, by America is his answer. A departure from the narrative approach of *Evicted*, *Poverty* is as direct as a manifesto, with a message as damning as its title: Desmond argues that the problem of poverty in the richest country in the world isn't unsolvable—it's just that a bloc of highly entrenched, privileged citizens live comfortable lives that are enabled and preserved by the systematic exploitation of the poor and powerless. Who are these people? Look in the mirror, Desmond argues; they're us.

"I have a deep suspicion of theories of poverty that are just letting us off the hook," he says. "The progressives have them, and the conservatives have them." Abolishing poverty, he argues, will only be possible if we can face our own complicity in its existence.

Desmond points to recent changes in the national conversation around race as evidence that there's a real opportunity for middle- and upper-middle-class people to begin examining that complicity critically. "I've given talks all over the country," he says, "and America is ready for a different poverty conversation." He hopes that *Poverty* will help launch it.

Kneerim died last year. Desmond visited her in a sunbathed hospice room, where she asked him what he was working on next. "She loved her work," he says, moved by her singular focus even on her deathbed. "She really did believe ideas can change the world."

Desmond believes that, too. When asked if he thinks his work will become more policy focused in the future, he says that the experience of *Evicted* helped clarify for him how he can best make a difference. "The last time I testified in front of Congress, I said we've got to have someone who was evicted testify. We brought this gentleman from Virginia who had stayed up all night working security, who then came to the House to testify. He didn't have a jacket, so one of the staff let him borrow a jacket. And of course, he's the one that everyone remembers. He took the air out of the room."

"I want my writing to be read by policymakers," Desmond adds. "I want to be in the meetings, but I'm getting to this place in my career where I think I'm a writer." By elevating people like that security guard from Virginia—so that readers and policymakers alike can encounter the problem of poverty firsthand—he has realized that perhaps the most powerful thing someone in his position can do is get out of the way and let the powerless speak for themselves. ■

Andy Kifer cowrote Mutualism: Building the Next Economy from the Ground Up *(Random House) with Sara Horowitz and is working on a book of narrative nonfiction about secret cities in the U.S.*

Reviews

Fiction

★ The Eden Revelation

David and Rhonda Rosenberg. Spuyten Duyvil, $25 trade paper (574p) ISBN 978-1-959556-05-3

Novelist David Rosenberg (*The Book of J*) collaborates with his wife, a public health researcher, for a stimulating narrative inspired by the biblical Garden of Eden. At the center is an ancient text called "The Scroll of the History of Adam" that was discovered and translated in the 1980s and takes a comparatively less damning view on the tree of knowledge and on sexual desire than the book of Genesis. Its surfacing triggers an extended discussion between scholars (and lovers) Archie Shechner and Julie Peleg, and after Archie disappears, his psychotherapist, Betti Peleg, Julie's mother, proceeds to write down their story based on transcriptions of her sessions with him. Betti weaves a provocative tapestry, with additional threads provided by Professor Svitz, an editor with whom Julie has begun an affair. In Betti's account, as Julie and Archie spend time with the scrolls, they gain access to an entity they call "the voice of Wisdom," which enriches their philosophical inquiries, but also triggers Archie's mental breakdown. After Archie's disappearance, Julie carries on dialogues with Svitz, worrying she and her lover might be "duller than we think." In the absence of a conventional narrative, the Rosenbergs make hay of the characters' ricocheting analyses and revelations. This experiment pays off with dividends. *Agent: Madison Smartt Bell, Panda Lit. (Mar.)*

Ada's Room

Sharon Dodua Otoo. Riverhead, $27 (352p) ISBN 978-0-593-53979-8

Otoo (*Synchronicity*) tracks a woman through many reincarnations and across centuries and continents in her clever if meandering latest. Readers first encounter Ada in 1400s Ghana, where she grieves the loss of her infant. Next, Ada's a mathematician in 19th-century London, where's she's addicted to gambling and carries on an affair with Charles Dickens. During WWII, Ada is sent by the Nazis to a concentration camp and forced to work in a brothel. In each of her lives, Ada receives the same mystical beaded bracelet, which figures each time into her death at the hands of a man (in Victorian England, it's her wedding bracelet). Before each iteration, an unnamed angel-like narrator tries to prevent Ada from meeting a similar fate as the last, reminding her, "all beings—past, present, and future—are connected," but Ada always forgets. Taken together, the early accounts of Ada feel a bit scattershot, but Otoo hits her stride after introducing the final version of Ada, pregnant and British-Ghanaian in present-day Germany. Here, Otoo gives her character more room to breathe, and the author draws poignant connections to Ada's past lives. Patient readers will find Otoo has much to say about ownership and belonging. *Agent: Markus Hoffman, Regal Hoffman Assoc. (Mar.)*

© DORI YELVERTON

Christine Byl digs into the private torments of a Montana family in Lookout *(reviewed on this page).*

The Drinker of Horizons

Mia Couto, trans. from the Portuguese by David Brookshaw. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $27 (256p) ISBN 978-0-374-60553-7

Couto's satisfying conclusion to his Sands of the Emperor trilogy (after *The Sword and the Spear*) finds 15-year-old series protagonist Imani pregnant and alone, and about to set sail with the Portuguese army to transport the recently captured king of Gaza, Ngungunyane, and other prisoners from Mozambique to Lisbon. Because Imani can speak Portuguese, she serves as translator for the soldiers and the prisoners, and as the lot travels from boat to boat and various ports, she bonds with one of Ngungunyane's wives, Dabondi, while navigating squabbles among soldiers, an assassination plot cooked up by the prisoners, unwanted sexual advances, and Ngungunyane's deteriorating sanity. Imani's goal is to safely reach Lisbon before giving birth and to reunite with her lover and live as a family—though once the group reaches Portugal, they hear word of continued fighting in Mozambique. With the precocious Imani's narration, Couto allows his protagonist's fears and hopes to take center stage, though the occasional epistolary communications folded into the narrative tend to distract. Despite a jarring time jump in the final chapter, Couto succeeds in wrapping up each character's story and in spotlighting the ravages of colonization. Series fans will enjoy this finale. *(Mar.)*

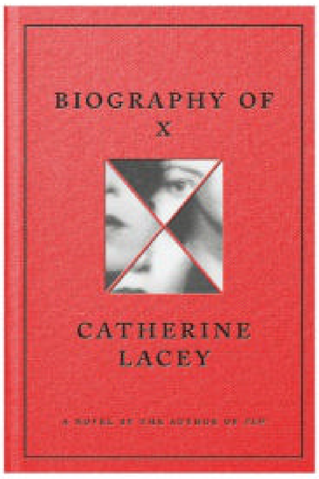
Lookout

Christine Byl. A Strange Object, $25.95 (300p) ISBN 978-1-64605-229-5

Byl's slow-burning and poignant debut novel (after the memoir *Dirt Work*) follows a Montana family across three decades. Josiah Kinzler inherits a hardware business near Glacier National Park in 1984, where he and his wife, Margaret, raise their two daughters, beautiful Louisa and tomboyish Cody. In vignettes, Byl unspools Cody's coming-of-age and Josiah's uneasy relationship to the small town. Josiah, secretly gay and dogged by depression, moves out of the family home in 1989 into a neighboring cabin, where he builds furniture and has a tryst with his male apprentice. While Louisa is away at college in 1993, Margaret's brother dies of AIDS, and in 1996, Cody, now a hotshot fire crew member, helps Josiah after he shatters his leg at work. As Cody settles into adult life with a boyfriend and Louisa gets married, Josiah dies in a car accident. Over the next 10 years, Cody's grief pushes her to confront the open secret of Josiah's sexuality and uncover the full circumstances of his death. Via letters discovered by Cody, revelations from a mean-spirited neighbor, and

★ Biography of X

Catherine Lacey. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $28 (416p) ISBN 978-0-374-60617-6



Lacey follows up *Pew* with an audacious novel of art and ideas set in an alternate late 20th century. It comprises a book titled *Biography of X*, which was published in 2005 by a journalist named C.M. Lucca. That book's subject, X, a pseudonymous multidisciplinary art star, reaches cult status as a novelist in 1973, when she's in her 20s (in one of many deliberately anachronistic references, X receives fan mail from a yet-to-be published Denis Johnson). Later, X travels to West Berlin to record with David Bowie, and, back in New York City, becomes a controversial performance artist. Lucca meets X in the mid-1980s, and they marry in 1990. Same-sex marriages are legal, thanks to progressive advances decades earlier pushed through by Emma Goldman, FDR's chief of staff. Goldman's agenda, though, led to a Southern secession in 1945. Shortly after the country is reunified in 1996, X dies from an unspecified cause. After an unauthorized biography of X is published, Lucca embarks on a project to set the record straight. She begins in the small Mississippi town where X was born, which X kept a secret to protect her from agents of the Southern Territory. As Lucca conducts interviews over the next several years, she begins to doubt how well she knew X after all. Lacey does a brilliant job convincing readers of Lucca's chops as a reporter, even as Lucca becomes unhinged. The author also perfectly marries her invented history with her study of a shape-shifting artist, with X refashioning herself both to escape her ultraconservative homeland and to build a vehicle for her creative expression. This is brilliant. *Agent: Jin Auh, Wiley Agency. (Mar.)*

touching scenes from Josiah's point of view, Bly gently excavates Josiah's complicated interior life. Readers will find much to savor. *Agent: Kate Garrick, Sally Literary Management. (Mar.)*

Künstlers in Paradise

Cathleen Schine. Holt, $27.99 (272p) ISBN 978-1-250-80590-4

Schine (*The Grammarians*) delivers another witty novel of manners, this time juxtaposing 1940s Hollywood with the present. Mamie Kunstler, 11, escapes from Vienna with her well-to-do Jewish family just as WWII begins. They settle in Los Angeles, where Mamie's playwright mother, Ilse, lands a job writing for the movies. In 2020, as L.A. goes into pandemic lockdown, cantankerous Mamie takes her 24-year-old grandson, Julian, into her crumbling Venice home. Mamie entertains Julian, who's having trouble finding himself, with stories about her charmed life around the movies, when, at a young age, she knew Christopher Isherwood, Anita Loos, and Greta Garbo, the last of whom she encountered on the beach at 12 and reconnected with at 20, the details of which she teases out to an increasingly enraptured Julian. One day while walking Mamie's Saint Bernard, Julian meets Sophie, an attractive neighbor, and the two strike up a friendship with the promise of romance. Nothing much happens over the course of this effervescent confection, but it hardly matters because Mamie, Julian, and company are such enjoyable characters to hang out with. Reading like a cross between *Leopoldstadt* and *Down and Out in Beverly Hills*, this does the trick as an emotionally resonant meditation on family, memory, and the need for stories. *(Mar.)*

Rootless

Krystle Zara Appiah. Ballantine, $27 (368p) ISBN 978-0-593-50045-3

Appiah debuts with an expansive and rich saga of a British Ghanaian woman balancing familial expectations with her own desires. In 2016 London, Sam Mensah is frantically searching for Efe Owusu-Mensah, his disappeared wife. With a parallel narrative, Appiah unspools Efe's story, beginning 19 years earlier when her parents sent her and her younger sister, Serwaa, from Accra, Ghana, to live with their aunt in London to finish secondary school. Culture shock overwhelms Efe, but Serwaa easily assimilates. Soon, though, Efe finds her footing with some help from her popular cousin, who introduces her to Sam. After pursuing a degree in economics, Efe fails out of college, much to her parents' chagrin. Depressed and isolated, she eventually decides to study art history before marrying Sam and reluctantly starting a family.

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Postpartum depression follows the birth of their daughter, but with time and therapy Efe's spirits improve. Still, she feels drawn to Ghana, where it turns out she's traveled to without telling Sam. Though the narrative runs a little longer than necessary, Appiah is adept at showing the ways Efe copes with the pain of abandonment and depression. This cosmopolitan work will speak to readers. *Agent: Jenny Bent, Bent Agency. (Mar.)*

Women Are the Fiercest Creatures

Andrea Dunlop. Zibby, $26.99 (312p) ISBN 979-8-9852828-0-1; $16.99 trade paper ISBN 978-1-958506-00-4

Dunlop (*We Came Here to Forget*) follows two women whose ideas are exploited by a tech entrepreneur in this dramatic if simplistic outing. Jake Sarnoff is about to become a dad again with his much younger second wife Jessica, whom he started seeing while still married to Anna. Jake still flirts with Anna and relies on her for support and advice regarding his social media site, Strangers, which Anna helped create. In public, Jake pays a lot of lip service to the importance of family, but at home, he hardly lifts a finger. Meanwhile, Sam Flores-Walsh moves to town and founds a popular yoga studio that Jessica frequents, though she's unaware that Sam is Jake's ex and an uncredited cofounder of Strangers. Sam has been telling a reporter at the *New York Times* how Jake ran with her concept and cut her out of the company, though she's worried she doesn't have enough proof. Though Dunlop's girl-power angle feels a bit stock ("A mother is capable of anything," reads one of Sam's Instagram posts; Anna and a friend clank wine glasses and shout "fuck the patriarchy"), she does a good job showing Jake's slippery, selfish nature. There's plenty to root for, but readers who prefer nuance should look elsewhere. *(Mar.)*

Fulgentius

César Aira, trans. from the Spanish by Chris Andrews. New Directions, $15.95 trade paper (176p) ISBN 978-0-8112-3169-5

Aira (*The Divorce*) departs from his frequent setting of contemporary Argentina for a playful and fantastical jaunt into ancient history. Fulgentius, an aging general in the Roman legion charged with pacifying the region of Pannonia, also happens to be a playwright, having authored a tragedy at the age of 12 about a conquering general such as himself, which turned out to have anticipated the course of his life. Though he considers himself but "a sublime amateur," his thoughts of conquest and the deadening cycles of taxation, rations, and reserves are increasingly overtaken by grandiose meditations on his career as a writer and his designs on his comely young assistant, Lacterius. Soon Fulgentius resolves to stage his opus in each new territory that falls to his armies, casting his actors from the ranks of his own soldiers and captives, musing on the double life of the artist even as he lays siege to enemy strongholds ("Nothing was lost, nothing was useless, since everything could pass into art"). As Fulgentius loses sight of the ramifications of his behavior, Aira springs plenty of coy jabs at the life of the mind and never skimps on details of the rapacious battalions. This is a coup. *(Mar.)*

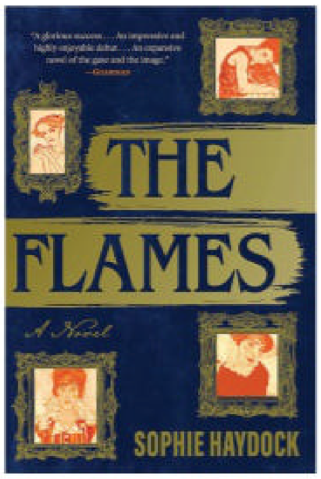
The Last Catastrophe

Allegra Hyde. Vintage, $17 trade paper (288p) ISBN 978-0-593-31526-2

Hyde (*Eleutheria*) continues in the vein of her previous dystopian fiction with an inventive speculative collection. In "The Future Is a Click Away," Hyde considers the trade-offs of online shopping, imagining an algorithm that knows everything about everyone and anticipates people's needs in advance. "Loving Homes for Lost & Broken Men" explores an alternate universe where husbands are taken in and fostered by caretakers, who reform them so they can have a chance to find "forever houses." "Democracy in America," a highlight, explores the consequences of a skin-grafting treatment that promises older people the chance to look young again. In the title story, the rich find solace in space and try to populate other planets after Earth is destroyed by "unchecked industrialization." Some of the shorter entries, however, feel like filler, with underdeveloped postapocalyptic settings. Sometimes the prose radiates (during a heat wave in "Disruptions," naked mothers "jiggle and lumber through town"), but elsewhere it lands as didactic (a refrain at the beginning and end of the collection: "We were consumers to the core. We were always doomed.... We are all culpable"). Whenever Hyde commits to her creative ideas, these stories

★ The Flames

Sophie Haydock. Overlook, $28 (464p) ISBN 978-1-4197-6631-2



Haydock's stunning debut captures the ecstatic shock of erotic art during the bohemian period of the Vienna Secession, dialing in on the brief life of Egon Schiele (1890–1918) and the four women who influenced the painter. They are his voyeuristic neighbors, sisters Adele and Edith Harms; his possessive younger sister, Gertrude; and the model Vally Neuzil, who was his lover and muse. Sections devoted to each woman explore the jealousy, guilt, and grief that swirl around their relationships with the artist. Adele takes to spying on Egon from across the street, deluded by the belief that they'll marry, and survives a bout of the flu; Gertrude recounts the Schieles' difficult childhoods with their abusive, syphilitic stationmaster father; Edith vies for Egon's attention, which leads to a tumultuous romance; and Vally remains independent. After Vally and Egon shelter a girl who's being abused by her father, the father presses charges of kidnapping and corrupting a minor (Egon is also charged with pornography). By the end, not all of the characters escape WWI or the Spanish flu pandemic, and Haydock's superb research captures the era's rich atmosphere. This assured effort will leave readers eager to see more from Haydock. *Agent: Juliet Mushens, Mushens Entertainment. (Mar.)*

take off. *Agent: Erin Harris, Folio Literary Management. (Mar.)*

As It Falls

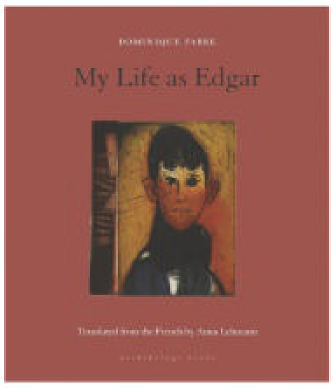
Donald Breckenridge. Ellipsis, $20 trade paper (148p) ISBN 978-1-940400-11-2

Breckenridge (*You Are Here*) draws on personal history and Sophocles's Oedipus cycle in his stimulating latest. What begins as a series of disjointed narrative chunks gradually coheres into a mostly unified narrative involving an unnamed author working on something—perhaps this novel—in his Brooklyn apartment at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic; a bisexual actor named Michael who is having an affair with his married costar, Kate, in an early-1980s *Oedipus* production; and an unnamed 19-year-old woman and an older married man who are also having an affair in 1967 Ohio. The author, who was adopted, imagines this couple to have been his biological parents. The 1967 scenes are the strongest; Breckenridge demonstrates great sensitivity in his depiction of the young woman, who leaves her intolerant conservative family to give birth to the author in California. The father, meanwhile, is a former jazz musician turned insurance adjuster caught between his freewheeling womanizing tendencies and his obligations to his family. Things get a little diffuse in the final act, though, as Michael and Kate slip into abstraction and Oedipus's daughter Antigone emerges for some reason in present-day New York City. From this fog, though, Breckenridge stages an affecting moment of parent-child reconciliation. This is worth digging into. *(Mar.)*

My Life as Edgar

Dominique Fabre, trans. from the French by Anna Lehmann. Archipelago, $18 trade paper (180p) ISBN 978-1-953861-48-1

A child's memories of his troubling early years flood the slack, underwhelming latest from Fabre (*The Waitress Was New*). The reader first meets Edgar, the narrator, in 1964 Paris. At three, he barely speaks, and he's internalized the frequent impression from others that he's "not all there." Despite what others think, though, he has a rich interior life. In a clever move, Fabre makes Edgar's exceptionally large ears a metaphor for the child's ability to pick up on people's thoughts. "Mickey Mouse was deaf compared to me," Edgar narrates, explaining how he's able to "hear" other characters' internal monologues. In one of the narrative's few pivotal scenes, Edgar witnesses his mother, Isabelle, meet a man named Bernard, whom Isabelle then sees for a brief period. (Edgar's version of Bernard's first impression of Isabelle: "She's afraid of everything… her kid's sick. She's beautiful, she doesn't know she's beautiful.") Edgar is then sent to a foster home in the country until he's 11, and his account of these years is a jumble of scatological obsession, vague references to the uprising of May 1968, and puerile accounts of "play[ing] lovers" with a foster sister. Previously, the author gave captivating voices to characters on the margins. This time, there's little more than a faint echo. *(Mar.)*



Dog on Fire

Terese Svoboda. Univ. of Nebraska, $19.95 trade paper (188p) ISBN 978-1-4962-3516-9

Svoboda (*Great American Desert*) delivers a lyrical Midwestern gothic. The novel opens when a woman sees her brother's ghost (both are unnamed) in a dust storm holding a shovel, a totem from his time working as a trim digger. The brother has been dead a month now, and since then his sister has been investigating what led to him being felled by a mysterious seizure. She begins with his lover, Aphra, the last one to see him alive, and listens to Aphra's painful life story involving a sexually abusive father. The siblings' father, meanwhile, chalks up his son's death to the work of aliens or the mob, or his son's handling of depleted uranium during his time in the military. More important than the sister's search for the truth are the many zany episodes: a séance, the auctioning of a hot tub, an attempt to douse a dog that's caught fire. The prose is challenging, shifting without punctuation or paragraph breaks from dialogue to internal monologues, but it can also be breathtaking, particularly from the sister's point of view: "I read from the kind of book that doesn't require staring-out-the-window thinking but replaces all thought with Olympic swimming pools of savage love and intrigue." For readers who like to put in the work, there are plenty of rewards. *(Mar.)*

God Went Like That

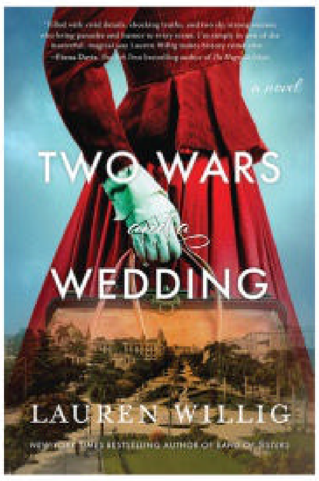
Yxta Maya Murray. Curbstone, $20 trade paper (200p) ISBN 978-0-8101-4602-0

Murray (*Art Is Everything*) delves into the impact of nuclear meltdowns in the 1950s and '60s on present-day California in her engrossing latest, presented as a report by an EPA agent. Reyna Rodriguez, 32, grew up near the Santa Susana lab in Simi Valley, where her mother worked as a cleaner and where the ground remains contaminated by nuclear waste. After Reyna's mother dies in 2010 from a rare carcinoma, Reyna, who had a series of debilitating childhood illnesses, gets a job with the EPA, hoping to bring accountability to pollutive industries. After the 2018 Woolsey Fire, she's assigned to Simi Valley to canvas community members regarding decades-old nuclear waste in the area. She encounters a wide range of perspectives, including those of a remorseful technician who remembers a slew of workers who died from exposure, and a chemist bent on convincing Reyna of the safety of nuclear plants compared to coal mines. Disenchanted with the EPA's limited focus on the project, and reflecting more deeply on her mother's death, Reyna spends over a year on the project, gathering much more info than what her employer wanted, and reconsidering what to do with her life. The interviews amount to harrowing personal narratives, and they add intriguing complexity to her understanding of her past. Murray shines with this ambitious project. *(Mar.)*

★ Two Wars and a Wedding

Lauren Willig. Morrow, $27.99 (448p) ISBN 978-0-06-298618-4

The winning latest from Willig (*Band of Sisters*) involves war and friendship in the late 19th century. The nonlinear timeline begins with Betsy Hayes, a Smith College graduate and aspiring archaeologist, boarding a boat for Cuba in 1898, determined to stop her estranged friend, Ava, from taking a dangerous



nursing post during the Spanish American War. Betsy had already witnessed the horror of the Greco-Turkish War, and though the details don't come out until later, Betsy believes her own life is of little value. In flashbacks to Athens, where Betsy had traveled two years earlier hoping to work on a dig, she meets Charles de Robecourt, a charming married archeologist who gives her a leg up (they also have an affair, and she falls in love with him). But Betsy's choice to become a nurse when war breaks out in Greece drives a wedge between her and Ava, who doesn't think Betsy is cut out for the work, and she faces further heartache involving Charles. Willig's strong character work and extensive research on the Smith College Relief Unit brings Betsy to vivid life. The harrowing battle details, too, are spot on, from the Spaniards' smokeless gunpowder to the menacing whine of a Mauser bullet. Readers will devour this riveting tale. *(Mar.)*

Siblings

Brigitte Reimann, trans. from the German by Lucy Jones. Transit, $16.95 trade paper (192p) ISBN 978-1-945492-66-2

The spirited English-language debut from Reimann (1933–1973) chronicles young love, idealism, and disillusionment in 1960s East Germany. Twenty-something siblings Elisabeth and Uli Arendt visit their parents over Easter weekend, accompanied by Elisabeth's fiancé, Joachim, a Communist Party member and manager of a mill. Elisabeth, a painter, loves Joachim, but she treasures her bond with Uli, which borders on romantic, so it's a shock when Elisabeth learns that Uli, an engineer frustrated with political difficulties that have hurt his career, is planning to defect to West Germany, as their materialistic, resentful older brother Konrad has already done. Desperate to keep Uli with her, Elisabeth contemplates informing on him to Joachim. As the weekend unfolds, Elisabeth reflects on painful memories of their childhood during fascism and on her own difficulties under communism, all the while arguing with Uli, who vows to bring communist principles to "his" shipyard in the west, a contradiction Elisabeth calls him on. There are plenty of engaging discussions about industry and politics, which Reimann enlivens with Elisabeth's volatility and enthusiasm. It stands as a solid work of socialist realism. *(Mar.)*

Mystery/Thriller

Death of a Bookseller

Alice Slater. Scarlet, $26.95 (368p) ISBN 978-1-61316-377-1

Brogan Roach and Laura Bunting—the narrators of Slater's bleak debut—meet when the new manager of the failing London bookstore branch at which caustic Roach has long worked hires chipper Laura to boost sales. The women are like oil and water: Roach wears only black and is obsessed with true crime, while Laura sports colorful berets and thinks true crime is "tacky, exploitative crap." But when Roach learns that Laura writes poetry about murder victims because her mother fell prey to a notorious serial killer, Roach starts stalking Laura, desperate to convince her they share a "dark connection." The harder Roach tries, the more her misguided actions repulse and terrify Laura, locking the two in a dangerous downward spiral that threatens mutual destruction. Roach and Laura alternate chapters, their first-person-present accounts imparting tension and urgency. Both characters feel a bit cartoonish in their melodrama, but on balance, Slater delivers a twisty exploration of society's fascination with the macabre. Fans of Simone St. James's *The Book of Cold Cases*, take note. *Agent: Caroline Eisenmann, Frances Goldin Literary. (Apr.)*

★ A Death in Denmark: The First Gabriel Præst Novel

Amulya Malladi. Morrow, $18.99 trade paper (336p) ISBN 978-0-06-323551-9

This superb series launch from Malladi (*The Nearest Exit May Be Behind You*) introduces PI Gabriel Præst, who was fired from the Copenhagen police's financial fraud division after he shared confidential information with a journalist because his corruption probe into the chief of National Police was stymied. Præst gets a hot potato of a case when his former lover, a defense attorney, asks him to exonerate a family friend, Yousef Ahmed. Ahmed was convicted of killing Sanne Melgaard, the anti-immigrant attorney general of Denmark, slitting her throat and stabbing her 15 times. Ahmed blamed Melgaard for deporting his son, Raheem, an Iraqi seeking asylum in Denmark, an act that led to ISIS torturing and executing Raheem. Ahmed admits he went to the victim's home to confront her, but denies he murdered her. Præst's pursuit of the truth takes some unexpected directions on the way to the satisfying conclusion. A killer plot matches an unusual lead sleuth, and secrets from Denmark's WWII past enhance the story line. Katja Ivar admirers will be eager for the series' next installment. *Agent: Rayhane Sanders, Massie & McQuilkin. (Mar.)*

The White Lady

Jacqueline Winspear. Harper, $28.99 (336p) ISBN 978-0-06-286798-8

In 1917, Elinor White, the heroine of this smart, nuanced mystery from bestseller Winspear (the Maisie Dobbs series), was working in a resistance network in German-occupied Belgium, where she, then 13, was living with her 15-year-old sister and British mother. Elinor later emigrated to England and served as a British intelligence agent. Now, in 1947, she lives quietly in Kent, staying aloof from the inhabitants of tiny Shackleford until the arrival of Jim Mackie; his wife, Rose; and their three-year-old daughter, Susie. Jim has left London and taken work as a farmhand to break away from the crime family into which he was born. His brothers are now pressuring him to help them pull off their latest criminal operation. Trauma in Elinor's past has made her acutely sensitive to children in peril, and she can't resist trying to protect Susie and her parents. As Elinor uses her undercover skills and former intelligence contacts to try to foil the Mackie brothers' plans, her sleuthing has unexpected personal repercussions. The chapters illuminating Elinor's dramatic backstory add vulnerability to her characterization, enriching the suspenseful main narrative. This will please both Winspear's fans and new readers. *Agent: Amy Rennert, Amy Rennert Agency. (Mar.)*

[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH AMULYA MALLADI

Something Rotten in Denmark

In Malladi's *A Death in Denmark* (Morrow, Mar.; reviewed on p. 41), PI Gabriel Præst reopens the case of a Muslim convicted of murdering Denmark's right-wing attorney general.

Why did you shift to a series after writing standalones?

I always wanted to write a mystery, but I don't plot very well. So I thought it was not going to happen, and then suddenly, there was this Danish politician whom I didn't like and I wondered, what if someone killed her? It was a conversation my husband and I had just for fun, but nothing came out of it. Then Covid hit, and I was missing traveling, I was missing Copenhagen. So I thought, well, maybe now's the time to write a book that will take me to Copenhagen. It didn't start out feeling like a series, because I'm very intimidated by the idea of writing a series.

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Are there historical parallels to the current Danish government's treatment of Muslim refugees?

The book is about racism. When you think of Denmark, and you think of WWII, you think, "Oh, my God, they saved all these Jews. What a great country." Well, you know, Danish Jews were Danes first and Jews second, so they saved them, but the other Jews were foreigners, and they were sent back to die in the concentration camps. That felt very much like what was happening today with Syria. The country will not accept Syrian immigrants—and let me be very specific—Syrian Muslim immigrants. But then the war in Ukraine broke out, and suddenly they're like, "Oh, yeah, we've got to take care of these people." I wanted to show that hypocrisy in the book.

Why make Gabriel Præst a clotheshorse?

I've been reading a lot of Nordic noir, and have watched TV shows like *The Bridge* and *The Killing*. For some reason, the protagonist is either an alcoholic or an addict, or is someone who doesn't know how to dress, and the stories are so dark. But Copenhagen is not dark. It's a fun, exciting city. People dress very well. I feel he represents to me a lot of who Copenhagen people really are.

Gabriel has a thuggish ally, Bør, who's reminiscent of Hawk from Robert B. Parker's Spenser series. Was Parker an influence?

I'm a big Spenser and Hawk fan, but Gabriel is a different kind of private investigator. He's not comfortable with violence. He's a family guy who likes to go to breakfast with his daughter, he's affectionate, he's insecure—and he's not an alpha male working out in a gym all the time. Plus, he bicycles everywhere, which is so typically Copenhagen.

—LENNY PICKER

Never Sleep

Fred Van Lente. Blackstone, $27.99 (320p) ISBN 979-8-200-81349-0

This taut series launch from bestseller Van Lente (*The Con Artist*) centers on the so-called Baltimore plot, whose participants sought to murder Abraham Lincoln before he could be inaugurated as president in 1861. Kate Warn (a fictionalized version of the real-life Kate Warne), the first female operative for Allan Pinkerton's National Police Agency, whose motto is "We Never Sleep," and a trainee, Hattie MacLaughlin, get handed a highly important assignment. The Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad has hired the Pinkerton firm to protect Lincoln after reports surface that an attempt will be made on his life when he changes trains in Baltimore on his way to Washington. The plotters believe that murdering Lincoln will both throw the Union into turmoil and shift Maryland into the ranks of states joining the Confederacy. The perilous mission gives Hattie, who idolizes Kate, an opportunity to prove her worth. Van Lente is especially good at building the relationship between veteran Kate and newcomer Hattie, who only applied to the agency to be a secretary. Well-developed characters match the fast-paced plot. Readers will eagerly await the sequel. *Agent: Jason Yarn, Jason Yarn Agency. (Mar.)*

Deep Fake

Ward Larsen. Forge, $29.99 (352p) ISBN 978-1-250-79820-6

In this solid standalone from Larsen (the David Slaton novels), Bryce Ridgeway, a first-term congressman from Virginia, becomes the front-runner for his party's candidate for president after he tosses a bomb-carrying terrorist off a hotel roof during a political reception in Washington, D.C. Though everyone considers Bryce a hero, his wife, Sarah, begins to worry about little things that don't seem quite right with her husband, such as increased forgetfulness. The FBI agent who takes charge of the bombing case figures out that the culprit was a 21-year-old

Saudi national, but that's about it. Sarah decides to "investigate" her own husband with her best friend, Claire Hall, who just so happens to have the use of a supercomputer that specializes in data fusion from all over the world. The suspense builds as Sarah and Claire follow a trail of clues that bring them closer and closer to solving the mystery of what's going on with Bryce, an Army veteran who suffered combat trauma. Fans of the There's-Something-Wrong-with-the-President (or in this case, almost president) mini genre will find plenty to like. *Agent: Susan Gleason, Susan Gleason Literary. (Mar.)*

★ Sunset Empire: A Morris Baker Mystery

Josh Weiss. Grand Central, $28 (448p) ISBN 978-1-5387-1947-3

In Weiss's superb sequel to 2022's *Beat the Devils*, set in a horrifyingly plausible alternate 1950s America, journalist Edward R. Murrow has faked his death to facilitate his covert leadership of the Liberty Boys, a group resisting President Joseph McCarthy, who defeated Adlai Stevenson in 1952, and the excesses of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Crackdowns on minorities intensify after a Korean American detonates a suicide bomb in response to U.S. atrocities in Korea, where war still rages in 1959. Against this fraught backdrop, Holocaust survivor Morris Baker, a former LAPD detective turned PI who aids the Liberty Boys, is hired by Ann Kissinger to trace her missing husband, Henry, a State Department consultant. Baker's initial digging suggests that Ann hasn't been wholly frank with him, but he pursues the disappearance at great personal risk. Weiss, who also throws a real-life unsolved murder into the mix, makes suspending disbelief easy by sweating the details of how a McCarthy-led America might have looked. Imaginative worldbuilding enhances the page-turning mystery plot. Fans of Robert Harris's *Fatherland* will be enthralled. *Agent: Scott Miller, Trident Media Group. (Mar.)*

The Lost Americans

Christopher Bollen. Harper, $30 (352p) ISBN 978-0-06-322442-1

At the start of this smoothly written if somewhat slow literary thriller from Bollen (*A Beautiful Crime*), Eric Castle, who works for a high-powered American defense contractor manufacturing state-of-the-art weapons and armaments, returns one afternoon to his hotel in Cairo. That night, he takes a fatal fall from his hotel room's third-floor balcony. In the morning, a hotel porter discovers his body on the pavement; the authorities rule his death a suicide. Meanwhile in New York City, Eric's sister, Cate Castle, has just broken up with her boyfriend when she hears the bad news about him. Certain that her brother didn't die by suicide, Cate travels to Cairo, where she enlists the help of an Egyptian friend of a friend, Omar, to follow up on clues Eric sent her shortly before his death. Soon she's up to her neck in danger and intrigue, and it's uncertain whether she and Omar will make it out alive. Bollen does a good job capturing the atmosphere of Cairo while exploring the personalities and experiences of his main characters, but he does so at the expense of pace and action. Readers in search of page-turning adventure may be tempted to skim this one. *(Mar.)*

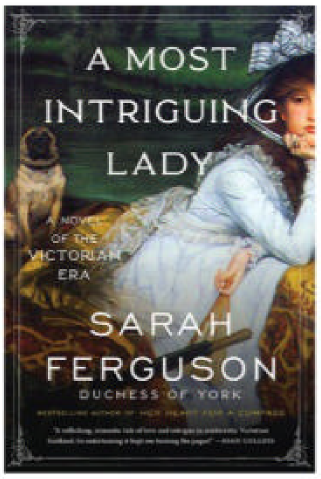
Forget What You Know

Christina Dodd. Canary Street, $17.99 trade paper (384p) ISBN 978-1-335-62400-0

Bestseller Dodd's busy sequel to 2022's *Point Last Seen* opens a thousand years ago in Tajikistan, where a miner discovers a fabulous ruby. A holy man, who recognizes that "the gem held the potential to incite violence," places the ruby inside a jewel-encrusted statue of a dragon, which many centuries later is spirited off to a collector in California. In the present, Zoey Phoenix, a flower breeder in Gothic, Calif., a small town known as "a center of mystical energy," winds up in the hospital after her car is run off the road. Her mother, Morgayne Phoenix, enlists Zoey's ex-husband, former professional wrestler Luca Damezas, to look after her while she recovers. Shortly thereafter, Morgayne drops out of sight, others are murdered, and Zoey's life is threatened. Who is behind these deaths, and why target Zoey? Fortunately, the author keeps on reminding readers of the whos, wheres, and whys of the hodgepodge of a plot, which contains a touch of magic, a dollop of mayhem, a drizzle of psychosis, a large splash of obsession, and just the right amount of sweet romance. This is for established

★ A Most Intriguing Lady

Sarah Ferguson. Avon, $28.99 (368p) ISBN 978-0-06-321682-2



This superior blend of mystery and romance from Ferguson (*Her Heart for a Compass*), the Duchess of York, introduces Lady Mary Montagu Douglas Scott, the younger daughter of close friends of Queen Victoria, who chafes at being expected to adhere to her era's rigid restrictions on women. She gets an opportunity to exercise her intellect and knowledge of human nature in 1872 when her parents host a party at a family home on the Scottish Borders. When a guest is distraught by the theft of her jewel-festooned brooch, Lady Mary solves the mystery, and this personally rewarding experience leads to other cases. By 1875, her reputation for handling sensitive inquiries discreetly—including probing the theft of charitable funds and the burglary of an aristocrat's safe concealed in her sitting room—has led to a secret life as a problem-solver for high society. Her detective work coincides with her growing interest in Col. Walter Trefusis, a 34-year-old war veteran who leads a covert life of his own. The author never lets the romantic plotline dominate and plausibly depicts the struggles of a capable woman who empowers herself to achieve her own potential. Claudia Gray fans will welcome a sequel. *Agent: Lacy Lynch, Dupree/Miller & Assoc. (Mar.)*

Dodd fans only. *Agent: Annelise Robey, Jane Rotrosen Agency. (Mar.)*

All That Is Hidden

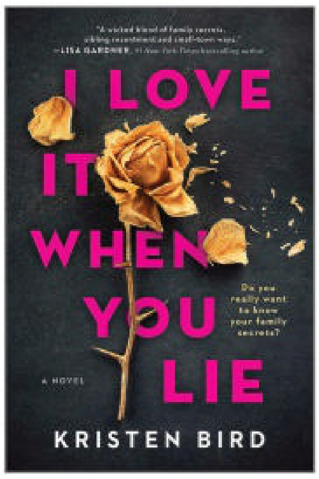
Rhys Bowen and Clare Broyles. Minotaur, $26.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-250-80809-7

It's 1907 in Bowen's mildly diverting 19th Molly Murphy mystery, the second coauthored with her daughter (after 2022's *Wild Irish Rose*), and Molly's police captain husband, Daniel Sullivan, has some shocking news for her. Despite Daniel's previous clashes with Tammany Hall, he's accepted their offer to serve as the city's sheriff. Plus, he's agreed to move his family into a fancy Fifth Avenue home that's a perk of the position. Molly eventually overcomes her anger at not being consulted before her spouse made these decisions, as they lead to multiple mysteries for her to probe. She's a passenger on a tour boat belonging to Daniel's corrupt patron, Big Bill McCormick, when a fire breaks out, the second such conflagration on one of McCormick's vessels, leading her to suspect arson. The authors also toss in a fatal stabbing in a locked room. There are the usual number of contrivances, such as someone rescued from a perilous situation turning out to have an influential parent. This collaboration offers familiar pleasures for series followers. *Agents: Christina Hogrebe and Meg Ruley, Jane Rotrosen Agency. (Mar.)*

★ I Love It When You Lie

Kristen Bird. Mira, $17.99 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-0-7783-3343-2

Set in Willow Gap, Ala., this exceptional mystery from Bird (*The Night She Went Missing*) focuses on the three Williams sisters: Tara, the eldest, has married the local Southern Baptist pastor; June has become a nurse and has married a doctor; and Clementine, the youngest, is still in college. Their brother, now Willow Gap's mayor, has scandalized the townsfolk by marrying Stephanie, whose major crime in their eyes is being a Northerner. Readers know from the outset that someone is dead, and that the Williams family had a hand in his demise, as revealed through the viewpoints of the three sisters and their sister-in-law. Bird judiciously doles out salient details of the women's lives and the decisions that have brought them to their current roles. The potential identity of the victim constantly shifts, as each woman has a bone to pick with her man. Rather than a whodunit, this is a "who's going to get what he deserves." As Stephanie says, "Justice would be great, but revenge is so much sweeter." This tale of sisterhood is un-put-downable. *Agent: Hayley Steed, Madeleine Milburn Literary TV & Film Agency. (Mar.)*



A Sinister Revenge: A Veronica Speedwell Mystery

Deanna Raybourn. Berkley, $27 (320p) ISBN 978-0-593-54592-8

Set in 1889, Raybourn's tantalizing eighth mystery featuring lepidopterist Veronica Speedwell (after 2022's *An Impossible Impostor*) takes her to Bavaria, where she hopes to reconnect with her estranged lover, Revelstoke "Stoker" Templeton-Vane. Veronica is joined by Stoker's brother, Tiberius, who has recently received two newspaper clippings in the mail describing the deaths of a German fossil hunter and a French bon vivant; in the margin of the second, someone has written: "You will be next. Prepare your soul. VENGEANCE FOR LORENZO." The dead men were part of a group, the Seven Sinners, that Tiberius belonged to at Cambridge University, and Lorenzo d'Ambrogio, another member, died in a storm after uncovering the complete fossilized skeleton of a new species of dinosaur. Though Tiberius believed the death an accident, the deaths of his colleagues, and the threat, have led him to reconsider. Veronica and Stoker return with Tiberius to England to protect him and uncover the truth behind the three deaths. Superior prose matches the clever plot. Fans of Anne Perry's Charlotte and Thomas Pitt series will be pleased. *Agent: Pamela Hopkins, Hopkins Literary Assoc. (Mar.)*

Gone Again

Minka Kent. Thomas & Mercer, $16.99 trade paper (260p) ISBN 978-1-6625-0539-3

The morning after the night Celia Guest, the protagonist of this solid psychological thriller from Kent (*Unmissing*), celebrated her 40th birthday with her close friends and loving husband, Rob, she begins opening her presents at her Connecticut home while Rob remains asleep. Among the cards wishing her well is an anonymous note: "You don't deserve any of this." This unsettling message prompts Celia to run away without telling Rob and disappear. Gen Jacobs, Celia's younger sister, who has wanted to form a closer bond with her sibling, sets out to find Celia. Gripping flashbacks told from both Celia's and Gen's perspectives reveal that the sisters were raised in an abusive, extremely religious household that Celia escaped from 20 years earlier while Gen quietly accepted the situation. The brisk plot and a surprising twist make up for a backstory that insufficiently explores the sisters' relationship as children and a conclusion that's a bit rushed. Never mind that some readers will unearth Celia's chilling secrets before Gen does. Those into family dramas will be satisfied. *Agent: Jill Marsal, Marsal Lyon Literary. (Mar.)*

The Color Red (Detective Bourque #1)

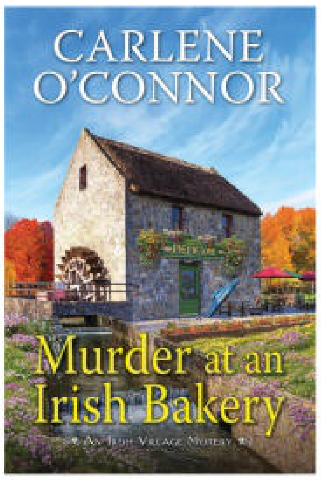
A.M. Potter. Stark House, $15.95 trade paper (250p) ISBN 979-8-88601-021-3

Early in this impressive series launch from Potter (*Bay of Blood*), Ivy Bourque, of the Massachusetts State Police's Cape & Islands Detective Unit, is called to the East Falmouth mansion of businessman Rollo Novak, who's originally from Slovenia. Novak, who made his billions funding startups, became a celebrity from his appearance on the popular reality show *Angels or Devils*; in the program, affluent entrepreneurs would assess new ventures and decide whether to support them or take them over. His majordomo, a fellow Slav, called 911 after finding the naked bodies of Novak and his wife, Katrina Hayden, a former Miss USA, hanging from a stair rail by their swimming pool. Bourque wonders whether the deaths were both murders or a murder-suicide, though a prologue makes clear both victims were murdered. The complex investigation includes many possible suspects, from disgruntled *Angels or Devils* contestants to someone connected to the Balkans' bloody past. Potter makes Bourque, who gave up a career in organic chemistry to hunt killers, a credible lead readers will root for. Fans of intelligent procedurals will hope for a long series run. *(Mar.)*

★ Murder at an Irish Bakery: An Irish Village Mystery

Carlene O'Connor. Kensington, $27 (304p) ISBN 978-1-4967-3081-7

At the start of O'Connor's excellent ninth Irish Village mystery (after 2022's *Murder on an Irish Farm*), a protester shouts, "Join the health revolution. Sugar is not your friend," outside Pie Pie Love, "Kilbane's best bakery housed in a historic flour mill," where a reality baking show is about to be filmed over the coming week. "Neither is noise-pollution before coffee," thinks garda Siobhán O'Sullivan, who's part of the security team for the show. The anti-sugar protestor collapses, possibly from an allergic reaction, after one of the contestants, Aoife McBride (aka "the Queen baker of Ireland"), puts makeup on his face for the camera. Later, a representative of the show's anonymous sponsor creates complications by providing the contestants with what he calls "secret weapons," which could be "a special ingredient, a new piece of equipment, or a coveted recipe." When one of the contestants dies under mysterious circumstances, Siobhán investigates, even as the show must go on. Distinctive, captivating characters match a gripping plot full of surprises. O'Connor reinforces her place among the top rank of cozy writers. *Agent: Evan Marshall, Evan Marshall Agency. (Mar.)*



Dark Queen Wary

Paul Doherty. Severn, $30.99 (224p) ISBN 978-1-4483-0864-4

Set in 1472, Doherty's strong fourth Margaret Beaufort mystery (after 2021's *Dark Queen Watching*) finds Margaret at the Moor, a beautiful palace with an eerie maze and a sinister history, where people associated with the victorious Yorkist side are starting to get murdered. With the Lancaster faction crushed at the recent Battle of Barnet, Margaret, the mother of the last Lancaster heir, Henry Tudor, is in a vulnerable position, made even worse when an imposter shows up, claiming to be her son returned from exile, and the king, Edward IV, insists that she house him. Beaufort's trusted clerk, Christopher Urswicke, counsels her on how to avoid incurring the king's wrath while investigating the murders at the Moor, which began with a Yorkist mercenary and are now moving on to the members of the personal guard of Richard Neville, who switched from York to Lancaster and died at the Battle of Barnet because his guards failed to protect him. Doherty does a fine job evoking the brutal atmosphere of the era, in both rich palaces and crime-infested London streets. Those familiar with the players in the Wars of the Roses and all the dynastic plotting will feel right at home. *(Mar.)*

A Gentle Murderer

Dorothy Salisbury Davis. Poisoned Pen, $14.99 trade paper (288p) ISBN 978-1-7282-7195-8

First published in 1951, this solid if somewhat dated mystery from MWA Grand Master Davis (1916–2014) opens on a sweltering August evening in New York City. Father Duffy, assistant pastor of St. Timothy's, one of Manhattan's largest Catholic parishes, is winding up his stint in the confessional when a final parishioner comes in, a hammer in his hand. "I think I killed someone," he tells the priest, and goes on to reveal clues to his identity and that of his victim. Duffy believes he has persuaded the young man to go to the police. When, the next day, the body of a young woman is discovered and no one comes forward to confess to the murder, Duffy decides to find the killer himself. His investigations run parallel to those of NYPD Det. Sgt. Ben Goldsmith, and eventually the two converge. A third strand of the story follows the murderer. The pace can be slow in places, and as a study in psychology it's rather simplistic by today's standards. Crime fiction scholars will best appreciate this entry in the Library of Congress Crime Classics series. *(Mar.)*

Murder Visits a French Village

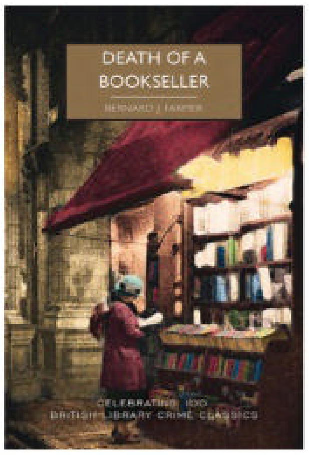
Susan C. Shea. Severn, $30.99 (224p) ISBN 978-1-4483-1018-0

In Shea's uneven third French Village mystery (after 2018's *Dressed for Death in Burgundy*), New Yorker Ariel Shepard is reeling from her husband's sudden death and his lawyer's revelation that he purchased a dilapidated 19th-century French chateau in Noyers-sur-Serein as a surprise for her. Coping with eccentric workmen there, mounting maintenance problems, and bat and rat challenges, she's happy to make new friends: British mystery writer Pippa Hathaway and U.S. expatriate Katherine Goff, as well as historian Christiane Breton, who begins to delve into the chateau's past. Christiane dies in what appears to be a fall at the chateau, but the death looks suspicious, and Pippa, Katherine, and Ariel vow to find out more despite police hostility to meddling amateurs and danger to Christiane's husband. Alert readers will quickly cotton on to the perpetrator and may become a little impatient with the oblivious Ariel. However, the colorful locals, as well as the rich culinary and cultural ambiance, show promise. Hopefully, Shea will do better next time. *Agent: Christine Hogrebe, Jane Rotrosen Agency. (Mar.)*

★ Death of a Bookseller

Bernard Farmer. Poisoned Pen, $14.99 trade paper (288p) ISBN 978-1-7282-6772-2

First published in 1956, this outstanding biblio-mystery from Farmer (1902–1964) opens with a chance encounter on a Middlesex road between Sgt. Jack Wigan, a policeman, and Michael Fisk, a rare book seller. The inebriated Fisk has been celebrating the find of a lifetime: John Keats's own inscribed copy of his poem *Endymion*. Fisk disabuses the sergeant of the idea that book collecting is a placid occupation, observing, "There are men and even women who would cheerfully kill me to get what I have found today." The two become friends, and Fisk instructs Wigan, who's looking for a new hobby, on the fine points of book collecting. Then Wigan arrives at Fisk's house one day to discover that he has been fatally stabbed in his library, a blood-spattered book about raising the dead beside him; the Keats volume has disappeared. Wigan plunges into investigating



the murder, exploring whether the occult tome's presence next to the corpse was just coincidence. Farmer vividly evokes the rare book trade without sidetracking the central question of whodunit. Those who treasure books won't want to miss this reissue in the British Library Crime Classics series. *(Mar.)*

Moonlight Can Be Deadly: A Discount Detective Mystery

Charlotte Stuart. Walrus, $16.95 trade paper (294p) ISBN 978-1-940442-47-1

In Stuart's strong fourth mystery featuring Cameron Chandler (after 2021's *Shopping Can Be Deadly*), Cameron, a PI employed by Penny-wise Investigations, an agency housed in a Seattle shopping mall, gets a violent and bizarre case, contrasting with her usual prosaic workload. While walking through the mall, Cameron notices Clara Ramsey crying on a bench and asks if there's anything she can do to help. Clara is worried about her niece, Tilly Jamison, a college sophomore whose care she assumed after the death of Tilly's mother. Tilly's involvement with an ecofeminist group, the Green Women, has led her to join a more fringe one: the Full Moon Society. That group ostensibly studies how ancient cultures regarded the moon, but the Seattle chapter focuses on lunar human sacrifices and plans to stage a fake one during the next full moon, with Tilly as the apparently voluntary victim. Cameron and a colleague stake out the ritual, in which a participant is fatally stabbed. The sleuthing never strains credulity, and Cameron's backstory—a widow with two children, she once aspired to an academic career—nicely complements the intriguing plot. Readers will hope to see a lot more of the endearing Cameron. *Agent: Donna Pudick, Parkeast Literary. (Mar.)*

The Nature of Secrets

Debra Webb. Thomas & Mercer, $16.99 trade paper (376p) ISBN 978-1-6625-0882-0

Webb's engrossing sequel to 2022's *The Last Lie Told* finds former ADA Finley O'Sullivan, who's still recovering from the shock of her husband's murder a year earlier, working as an investigator for her friend and mentor, attorney Jack Finnegan. Their newest client, Ellen Winthrop, the head of a financial consulting firm in Nashville, Tenn., is accused of killing her new and much younger husband, Jarrod Grady, in their home with a titanium hammer, a gift to Ellen from a friend to mark her breaking into the Fortune 500. Ellen admits she recently discovered that Jarrod had been taking large sums of money out of three of her savings accounts to which he had access, making her the prime suspect. Finley has a hard job proving Ellen's innocence as the five senior members of Ellen's staff, who have secrets to hide, do their best to thwart her investigation. Meanwhile, Finley tries to uncover the truth behind her own husband's murder. Readers will root for the fully realized lead characters, despite their flaws, as the complex plot builds to a satisfying climax. Webb should win new fans with this entry. *Agent: Stephanie Rostan, LGR Literary. (Mar.)*

A Tempest at Sea

Sherry Thomas. Berkley, $17 trade paper (368p) ISBN 978-0-593-20060-5

Set in 1887, Thomas's routine seventh Lady Sherlock mystery (after 2021's *Miss Moriarty, I Presume?*) finds Charlotte Holmes, who has pretended that there was a Sherlock Holmes whom she assisted while actually conducting the inquiries herself, still faking her death following a confrontation with Professor Moriarty in the previous book. While keeping her survival a secret, Charlotte accepts a request from Lord Remington, the man responsible for most of the British Empire's intelligence-gathering, who wants her to trace a sensitive missing dossier. The trail leads her to the RMS *Provence*, a vessel traveling from Southampton to Gibraltar. On board, her assignment takes a different tack when a passenger is shot to death; the killer left some graffiti on an adjacent wall, including the words *common* and *vulgar*. The need to solve the murder complicates the initial mission. The prose can be awkward ("How incompetent must a man be, to turn a simple hymen breaching into one of the biggest Society scandals in years?"), and the characters aren't much more than stock types. Readers interested in a gender-flipped Holmes will be better served by Claire O'Dell's more imaginative Sara Holmes novels. *Agent: Kristin Nelson, Nelson Literary. (Mar.)*

★ The Great Unmaking

Brian Nelson. Blackstone, $27.99 (474p) ISBN 978-1-5385-0784-1

Set in 2027, the stunning final volume of Nelson's Course of Empire trilogy (after 2021's *Five Tribes*) finds scientist Eric Hill, who was part of the team that developed nanosites, which are both "sentient and capable of evolving on their own," worried that the U.S. government has become so obsessed with threats from charismatic ecoterrorist Riona Finley and her New Anarchists that this technology will be misused—especially with the aid of the new, virtually omniscient AI system. Hill rightly suspects that the program's new boss, Gen. Chip Walden, has dangerous private goals. Meanwhile, hangdog FBI agent Bud Brown is vowing to redeem himself by getting sober and tracking down Finley's deadly master bomb maker. While all this turmoil is building, Finley's message becomes increasingly relevant: Our population is too large and our civilization too wasteful to survive. The tension builds toward a climax in which life on Earth must either be wiped out by nuclear holocaust or horrifically transformed into something with new possibilities. This is challenging stuff, but it's so clearly and forcefully presented that readers will find it hard to put the book down. Nelson has outdone himself. *Agent: Andrea Cavallaro, Sandra Djikstra Literary. (Mar.)*

The Dollmaker

Morgan Shamy. CamCat, $25.99 (304p) ISBN 978-0-7443-0862-4

Physician Dawn Hildegard, the 21-year-old heroine of this underwhelming serial killer yarn set in 1920 Newport, R.I., from Shamy (*The Redpoint Crux*), is struggling to find her feet in her profession, given the pervasive resistance to the idea of being treated by a woman. Her professional worries soon take a back seat to the concern caused by the arrival in Newport of the Dollmaker, an itinerant serial killer, "who killed young girls and hacked off their limbs, only to sew their different body parts back together." Dawn involves herself in identifying the sadistic murderer after her closest friend, Rose Waterford, the prima ballerina in the company she herself dances with, disappears. Frantic to find Dawn before it's too late, the physician allies herself with a new acquaintance, Gideon Hemsworth, whose attractive appearance unsettles her, and who has his own reasons for bringing the Dollmaker to justice. Romantic subplots, such as Dawn's mother's attempts to get her daughter wed, add little, and the final reveal disappoints. The execution falls short of the book's promising premise, a pioneering female doctor forced to search for a murderer who may have abducted her friend. Fans of serial killer fiction can safely take a pass. *Agent: Marisa Corvisiero, Corvisiero Literary. (Mar.)*

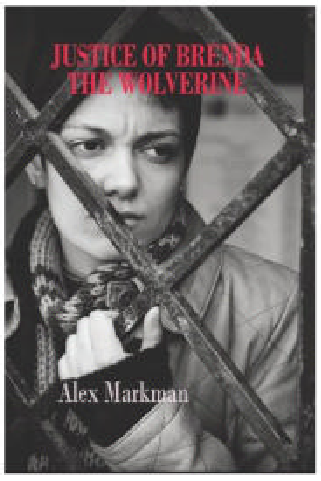
Clean Win: A Sam Quinton Mystery

Kevin R. Doyle. Camel, $16.95 trade paper (222p) ISBN 978-1-6849-2077-8

In Doyle's third entertaining case (after 2021's *Heel Turn*) for former professional wrestler turned gym owner and PI Sam Quinton of Providence, Mo., Sam is surprised when Lt. William Santiago of the Providence PD shows up at his gym one day to discuss the murder of Laura Mosely, a hair stylist who was found strangled in her bedroom two months earlier. It seems that the DNA results have just been sent to Santiago, and the only definite match to someone who was in the room around the time of the woman's death is that of Mayor Bob Marlow, who has recently announced his intention to run for governor. Laura had been Marlow's occasional lover, so his DNA doesn't conclusively point to his guilt. Santiago doesn't want to haul the mayor in for questioning without supporting evidence, and he fears that if he hands the DNA results over to his investigating officers, the information about the mayor's involvement will leak to the media. Quinton embarks on a discreet investigation, but he soon finds himself in murky waters as he comes to realize the full impact of the young woman's death. Charming characters match the quick and easy reading plot. With any luck, Sam will be back soon. *(Mar.)*

Justice of Brenda the Wolverine

Alex Markman. Asteroid, $14.99 trade paper (240p) ISBN 978-1-926720-54-8



Toronto police detective Melissa Bonar lands an unusual homicide case in this enthralling mystery from Markman (*Contra-Odessa*). Edward Green was found in his apartment, half-naked, with his wrists slit, an apparent suicide. But there are several odd elements, including evidence that Green was sodomized before his death. He was found by his girlfriend before expiring from blood loss, but the only word he uttered that she understood was *Wolverine*. That clue leads Bonar to Brenda Rorke, an ex-con who was given the nickname of Wolverine in prison, for her fearlessness in confronting bigger female inmates bent on beating her up. After learning that Green once went by another name, the detective theorizes that he was assaulted in revenge for an unpunished crime that Rorke, who's currently shacked up in a trailer park with a biker gang, may have been involved in. Markman toggles between past and present, leaving readers guessing on how everything will play out, and succeeds in making Rorke a character readers will sympathize with. Those interested in a nuanced look at what could lead someone to lash out violently will be satisfied. *(Self-published)*

SF/Fantasy/Horror

A Portrait in Shadow

Nicole Jarvis. Titan, $16.95 trade paper (432p) ISBN 978-1-80336-234-2

Jarvis (*The Lights of Prague*) centers her belabored second fantasy on historical 17th-century artist Artemisia Gentileschi. The magical conceit is familiar but fascinating: artists enact healing magic by painting their essence into their works. Artemisia herself, however—alone in Florence after her painting tutor raped her and struggling to make her way as a "true painter"—disappoints. Rarely does Jarvis engage with the complexities of the actual Artemisia, paring away events like the painter's marriage in an apparent attempt to make her story fit more neatly into a #MeToo framework. The resulting character study marinates in Artemisia's fury against the men who have hurt her and despair when other men are slow to save her—among them Stefano Silvestrini, her first regular patron; Galileo Galilei, an avuncular role model; and eventually the merchant Francesco Maria Maringhi, who becomes both patron and lover—until she's forced to choose between art and revenge. While Jarvis's descriptive skill is undeniable, even the lush evocations of Florence come across as jarringly modern. Jarvis succeeds in finding resonance between Artemisia's story and the modern era, but this simplified reenvisioning is like swapping a portrait for a paper doll. *(May)*

★ Some Desperate Glory

Emily Tesh. Tordotcom, $28.99 (448p) ISBN 978-1-250-83498-0

World Fantasy Award winner Tesh (the Greenhollow duology of novellas) jumps from quiet fantasy to ambitious sci-fi in her raw and action-packed full-length debut. Raised on Gaea Station with the last of humanity, Valkyr has been indoctrinated from childhood into intense hatred of the majoda—the alien race that destroyed Earth—and thirsts for vengeance. When Kyr comes of age, however, she's disappointed to be assigned to Nursery rather than combat, her body designated to breed future supersoldiers. Meanwhile, Kyr's brother, Magnus, is assigned off-station to certain death. Kyr takes justice for humanity into her own hands to save Magnus—but once she's away from Gaea Station, the principles she's been fed her whole life are called into question. Tesh's sweeping epic wrestles with the nature of hatred, vengeance, and radicalization. The political theme of breaking away from fascist ideology pairs beautifully with smart sci-fi worldbuilding—which encompasses shadow engine technology and time slips—and queer coming of age. This riveting adventure deserves a space on shelves alongside genre titans like Ursula K. Le Guin and Octavia Butler. *Agent: Kurestin Armada, Root Literary. (Apr.)*

The Merry Dredgers

Jeremy C. Shipp. Meerkat, $16.95 trade paper (200p) ISBN 978-1-946154-46-0

Shipp (*Bedfellow*) skillfully skewers the cult qualities of self-actualization programs in this spooky, satirical send-up of a mind and body retreat with a shady side. Seraphina Ramon, who makes her living playing storybook princesses at children's parties, is already struggling to accept her sister Eff's wholehearted embrace of the Merry Dredgers, a suspicious self-help organization, when calamity strikes: Eff's reviled ex-boyfriend is gravely injured in a hit-and-run accident, and Eff herself takes a suspicious fall that leaves her comatose. Suspecting the Dredgers' hand in both incidents, Seraphina infiltrates a spiritual retreat that the organization is hosting, bizarrely, at an abandoned theme park, Goblintropolis. There, she submits to the ministrations of Ernie, the Dredgers' leader, whose instruction in "energy work" to explore her "spiritual depths" distract from his disturbing power fantasies. The details of the Dredgers' regimen of new age rituals, which appear all the more absurd for being enacted against a landscape of dilapidated rides and still functioning animatronic goblins, are consistently amusing. Readers who like their weird fiction with a dash of wry humor will eat this up. *(Apr.)*

In the Lives of Puppets

T.J. Klune. Tor, $28.99 (432p) ISBN 978-1-250-21744-8

Bestseller Klune (*Under the Whispering Door*) draws from *Pinocchio* to create a gripping and heartfelt queer dystopian tale set in a world where humanity has been eliminated by robots. Victor Lawson, 21, was raised by his robot father, Giovanni, in a secluded forest in far-future Oregon. Together with two friends—antisocial Nurse Ratched (short for "Nurse Registered Automaton to Care, Heal, Educate, and Drill") and neurotic vacuum Rambo—Victor discovers an angry, powerful android in the nearby scrapyard. Hap, as the trio comes to call him, quickly imprints on Victor, who repairs the android's body with wood and powers him with a carved heart containing a drop of Victor's own blood. When Giovanni is seized by the law and taken to the City of Electric Dreams, a recorded message from Giovanni reveals that Victor is the last surviving human—and that Hap is a model HARP (Human Annihilation Response Protocol) created by Giovanni to hunt and kill humans before he learned regret. Hap, who doesn't remember this violent past, promises not to hurt Victor as they concoct a plan to rescue Giovanni. Klune makes the central question of what it means to be human feel direct, urgent, and fresh. Both very funny and deeply touching, this evocative retelling will delight Klune's fans and newcomers alike. *(Apr.)*

The Fairy Bargains of Prospect Hill

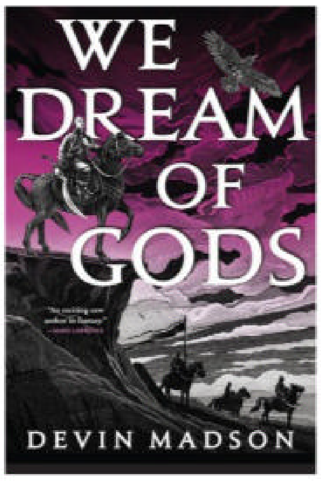
Rowenna Miller. Redhook, $18.99 trade paper (416p) ISBN 978-0-316-37847-5

Miller (the Unraveled Kingdom series) takes readers to the turn-of-the-20th-century Midwest for this flawed but atmospheric standalone historical fantasy. Sisters Alaine and Delphine have been raised on their grandfather's tale of how a fairy encounter gained him the family farm, and on their grandmother's lore of how to make small, safe, everyday bargains with unseen fae. Alaine is devoted to the farm, while Delphine marries a man from the city. Both paths have their bumps, and as the sisters' struggles slowly build, so too does their willingness to break their grandmother's rules and make increasingly dangerous deals with the fae. There's a touch of Faust to the plot, and a bit of *Frozen*, too. The storytelling has a YA vibe in its simplified conflicts and improbabilities: if the farm is threatened by foreclosure, for instance, where is cash coming from for silk dresses and watercolor paints? In a purely historical novel, the glossed-over detail and lack of grit would be fatal, but the fairies are the point here, and Miller conjures them fully at last alongside a thoughtful meditation on sisterhood and priorities. It's not revelatory, but it has its charms. *Agent: Jessica Sinsheimer, Context Literacy Agency. (Apr.)*

★ We Dream of Gods

Devin Madson. Orbit, $18.99 trade paper (624p) ISBN 978-0-316-53645-5

The religious, political, and personal conflict between the Chiltaens, the Kisians, and the Levanti comes to an epic close in Madson's masterful final Reborn Empire fantasy (after *We Cry for Blood*). As the Chiltaens continue their assault in Kisia, the villainous Leo Villius—who has been demoted from the role of hieromonk and replaced by Dishiva e'Jaroven, a Levanti—schemes to regain both power and control over his brother, Unus. To do so, Villius must take Lady Sichi to be his consort with two voices, and thus complete another step in his path to becoming the Veld reborn, but this plan is jeopardized by Kisian Empress Miko Ts'ai's plot to maintain her own power. Assassins Cassandra, Kaysa, and Yakono are closing in on Villius as well. Meanwhile, Rah and Gideon face the wrath of their fellow Levanti as they navigate the scheming of Whisperer Ezma. The author manages to tie up myriad loose threads in an incredibly satisfying finale. None of the characters are lost in the action, each coming to an ending that feels entirely right for their arc. Madson sends the series out on a high. *Agent: Julie Crisp, Julie Crisp Literary. (Mar.)*



The Trees Grew Because I Bled There: Collected Stories

Eric LaRocca. Titan, $17.95 (208p) ISBN 978-1-80336-300-4

In this collection of eight horror shorts, LaRocca (*Things Have Gotten Worse Since Last We Spoke*) displays his signature style of rendering grotesque and brutal subject matter in exquisite prose. It starts strong, with the one-two punch of emotional heavy hitter "You Follow Wherever They Go" followed by "Bodies Are for Burning," which takes readers into the disturbing mind of a woman whose thoughts are consumed by a desire to light the people around her on fire. The standout is the title story, in which a toxic relationship takes a mental and physical toll on the involved couple. LaRocca falters slightly with “You’re Not Supposed to Be Here,” which is reminiscent of the Saw movie franchise, and the lackluster “Where Flames Burned Emerald as Grass.” Still, the visceral depictions of unhinged psyches (“Suddenly, the thought arrives to me like a canine beckoned by a whistle. I imagine pressing a lighter against the small child’s index finger, holding the flame there until her pink skin bursts open and crinkles like a tube of blood sausage”) and unflinching body horror throughout will please LaRocca’s fans—and ought to earn him some new ones. *(Mar.)*

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Backpacking Through Bedlam

Seanan McGuire. DAW, $17 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-0-7564-1857-1

In many ways a capstone to all that’s come before, McGuire’s entertaining 12th InCryptid urban fantasy (after *Spelunking Through Hell*) draws together numerous characters and threads from earlier installments, offering updates on previous protagonists and giving fan-favorite supporting characters more room to shine. Cryptologist-turned-adventurer Alice Price-Healy has finally reunited with her missing husband, Thomas, after 50 years spent searching for him through myriad alternate worlds, but their long separation means they must work to rebuild their relationship. They barely have time to settle into a new normal after returning home along with their pseudo-daughter, Sally, before they’re called to travel to New York, where other members of the extended Price family are engaged in a quiet war with the monster-hunting Covenant of St. George, who are determined to wipe out every cryptid in the city—and the Prices along with them. Toggling between the aftermath of Alice and Thomas’s reunion, the conflict against the Covenant, and flashbacks to Alice’s earliest adventures, there’s a slight kitchen sink feel to this offering, but, as always, McGuire offers plenty of action and mayhem, complex worldbuilding, snappy dialogue, and a strong focus on the strength of family—both biological and found. Fans will not be disappointed. *Agent: Diana Fox, Fox Literary. (Mar.)*

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[Q&A]

PW Talks with Emily Tesh

Far-Future Fascism

Valkyr, a woman raised to seek revenge against the aliens that destroyed Earth, must reckon with her prejudice in Tesh’s space opera debut, *Some Desperate Glory* (Tordotcom, Apr.; reviewed on p. 47).

What inspired Valkyr’s arc?

The origin of this book started in 2016–2017, and there was a lot of political upheaval happening around the world. I think of it as quite a British book. There’s a little bit of Brexit in there. There’s the rise of authoritarian populism in there. I felt that there were things to say—not just that we should resist, that’s a no-brainer; “I think space Nazis are bad” is about as far as you need to go. What I was actually interested in is what would lead a person to destroy themselves for a cruel and hateful ideology that doesn’t love them back. That’s true of Kyr’s story; she’s dedicated to a world that is consistently abusing her. It’s the emotional trap of authority and charisma. The emotional safety of what you’ve always known, what you’ve believed in, and how difficult it can be to change your mind.

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How did you approach creating alien cultures?

I wanted to make aliens that didn’t work like humans and I wanted them to be the opposite of what Kyr supposes they are. They are not one group; they’re not one federation like in Star Trek. The reader might assume they are, because that’s how Kyr frames them, at first. They are sentient beings living in harmony with each other.

The characters grapple with concepts of justice and revenge and how—or whether—they should be enacted. Would you consider this an anti-revenge narrative?

That’s there, but it’s not central to the story. I think what’s centered in this story is why you would buy into an ideology that hates you, and that is through grievance, being wronged. Kyr, her brother Mags, and her frenemy, Avi, all have a genuine grievance: their world was taken from them before they were even born. They’re in this objectively awful situation, and it’s clearly someone’s fault. They have good reason to feel wronged, and the question is what do they do about it? What do you do with the legacy of an unjust past, when you’re left holding the bucket with all the problems in it?

How did you balance the—literally—cosmic and personal conflicts?

I prioritized the ones that mattered, which is the individual ones. In a way, Kyr turning the cosmic into the individual is her growth story. At first, she only sees the big picture—right and wrong, these people killed our world—when in the end it’s about the people in front of her. It’s about seeing people and not the big picture, because often the big picture is a lie.

—Lyndsie Manusos

A Night of Screams: Latino Horror Stories

Edited by Richard Z. Santos. Arte Publico, $24.95 trade paper (168p) ISBN 978-1-55885-961-6

Santos (*Trust Me*) brings together 18 stories and four poems for a wide-ranging anthology that demonstrates the hybridity of the horror genre. Santos states in his editor's note that he aimed to include "a little bit of everything," and he certainly succeeds. The strongest pieces combine paranormal frights with social horrors like racism, machismo, and the struggle of migrant workers. "Indian Blood" by Marcos Damián León follows a man who discovers a mystical gift for growing crops, only to be taken advantage of by his greedy neighbors. In Flor Salcedo's standout "La Llorona Happenings," a woman believes she hears the desperate wails of Mexican legend La Llorona coming from outside of her apartment every night—but when she finally gathers the courage to look out the window, she sees a much worse and more immediate horror. Supernatural creatures from both Latinx and Western folklore take center stage in many of these pieces: Adriana Ernesto Cepeda puts a spin on the ghost story in "A Night of Screams in Austin, TX," while Mónica Teresa Ortiz's "A Curious Encounter" centers on the Chupacabra. Ranging from unsettling to all-out macabre, this anthology delivers more than just the typical jump scare. *(Mar.)*

The Shoemaker's Magician

Cynthia Pelayo. Polis, $27.99 (336p) ISBN 978-1-957957-10-4

The haunting if overbearing second paranormal mystery in Pelayo's Chicago Saga series (after *Children of Chicago*) pays homage to a slew of classic horror films. As a child, Polly used horror movies to escape the real horror of life with an abusive mother—and they gave her and her brother an idea. Desperate to escape their home life, the pair attempted magick to summon demons and ask for what they desired most. Their parents died shortly after, making Polly believe that their magick really worked. Now Polly has a successful career as a YouTuber discussing all things horror and a happy domestic life with Chicago homicide detective Bass and their young son, Bela. Bela's origins, however, have a dark backstory: after six miscarriages, a desperate Polly invoked all 72 demons to grant her wish of having a child. When Bass starts investigating a series of murders involving demon sigils and horror movies, Polly fears the ritual she did to get Bela may be responsible. Pelayo loads the text with references to cult films and asides about their production histories that will delight horror buffs but may overwhelm more casual fans. The details about Chicago are similarly exhaustive. This is not for the faint of heart. *Agent: Lane Heymont, Tobias Agency. (Mar.)*

Eldritch Prisoners: A Cthulhu Mythos Anthology

David Conyers et al. Crossroad, $19.99 trade paper (290p) ISBN 978-1-63789-727-0

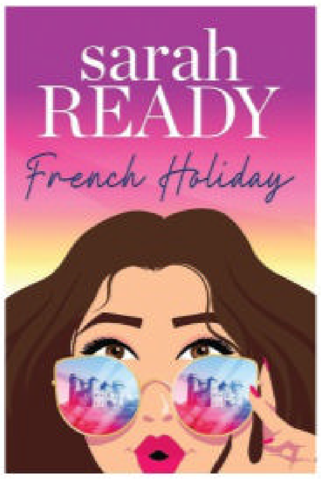
H.P. Lovecraft fans looking for originality will be delighted by this eerie anthology of four novelettes. Conyers's recurring character, Peel, a 21st-century soldier, finds himself on the edge of the galaxy in standout tale "Broken Singularity." Peel's depicted regaining consciousness multiple times as part of a baffling process in which he and several cyborg companions are dispatched to gather information—missions that always end badly. Matthew Davenport sets "The Prisoner from Beyond" in an alternate Reconstruction-era U.S. as two members of the Esoteric Cavalry investigate a disease afflicting a small western town. David Hambling's psychic investigator Harry Stubbs hunts grave robbers in the 1920s London–set "Body Snatchers." In "Leng's Labyrinth" by John DeLaughter, a student turns fugitive after witnessing a murder. The variety of eras and settings make this a welcome respite from the umpteen Lovecraftian pastiches set in spooky New England towns, and Easter eggs linking the stories add to the appeal. The resulting whole is greater than the sum of its parts. *(Mar.)*

Romance/Erotica

★ French Holiday

Sarah Ready. Crown, $15.99 trade paper (454p) ISBN 978-1-954007-48-2

Ready (*The Fall in Love Checklist*) whisks readers to the South of France for a saucy enemies-to-lovers romance. Merry DeLuca is in desperate need of a getaway after her best friend and secret crush, Leo, marries her sister. She takes off for a three-month stay at a chateau in Annecy, France—only to arrive and find that Leo's insufferable friend, travel documentarian Noah Wright, is also staying on the estate. Merry is there looking for a meaningless fling with a French stranger, while Noah is there searching for the father he's never known. The pair have never gotten along, partly because Noah has always been smitten with Merry and, aware of her feelings for Leo, has kept her at arm's length as self-preservation. As they learn to coexist, their chemistry and connection become undeniable, but Noah has no interest in merely being Merry's rebound guy. Little does he know that Merry's falling so hard she's stopped thinking about Leo entirely. Ready paces their slow-burning romance perfectly, making the buildup as tantalizing as it is torturous. The lush backdrop, ample humor, and dollop of mystery surrounding Noah's parents only add to the charm. This is a winner. *(Apr.)*



Verity and the Forbidden Suitor

J.J. McAvoy. Dell, $17 trade paper (400p) ISBN 978-0-593-50006-4

McAvoy brings a fairy tale feel to this diverse and illicit Regency romance, the second installment to the Du Bells series (after *Aphrodite and the Duke*). Lady Verity Eagleman, who longs for a sense of belonging she's never felt among her cold family, feels like a thorn among roses while staying with the boisterous, tight-knit Du Bells. It's there, however, that she meets handsome Dr. Theodore Darrington, who, despite his shyness, falls for her almost immediately. When one illness or another repeatedly throws them into each other's paths, a friendship develops and slowly strengthens into love. Despite Theodore's newfound fame in high society for his medical skills, however, his dubious parentage (he's the illegitimate son of a marquess) makes him an unsuitable match for a lady. They're both eager to sneak alone time together, but they have different ideas about where their relationship is headed: Theodore hopes to enjoy what little time they have left before they're forced to part ways, while Verity believes they can find a way to stay together forever. The leads are well suited and the series conceit—which diversifies the upper echelons of Regency society sans historical comment or justification—continues to make for memorable, Black-centered love stories. Readers will be pleased. *Agent: Natanya Wheeler, Nancy Yost Literary. (Apr.)*

A Rogue's Rules for Seduction

Eva Leigh. Avon, $9.99 mass market (368p) ISBN 978-0-06-308629-6

A rowdy weeklong house party is the backdrop for the reunion between a headstrong lady and the surly Scotsman who jilted her at the altar in Leigh's steamy third Last Chance Scoundrels Regency romance (after *How the Wallflower Was Won*). Willa Ransome vowed never to speak to her ex-fiancé, Dominic Kilburn, again, so she's furious when her meddlesome brothers orchestrate a reunion by inviting them both to the same party. Dominic is wracked with guilt over leaving Willa but believes she would have hated him even more if she learned the truth of his checkered past. They initially tiptoe around each other, but soon their lingering desire and longing gives way to spicy sex scenes with a BDSM edge. Leigh has a real gift for sensual moments ("Let me bide awhile with you like this," he said, his voice gruff. "If I am what you desire, then use me as it pleases you."), making the connection between her leads palpable even as lingering secrets and distrust threaten to tear them apart. This second-chance love story will leave readers breathless. *(Apr.)*

★ Kismet

Becky Chalsen. Dutton, $17.99 trade paper (336p) ISBN 978-0-593-47150-0

Chalsen's stunning debut, which walks the line between romance and women's fiction, beautifully illustrates the power of family and forgiveness. Amy and her husband, Ben, both 30, are reeling from the pain of a miscarriage, but agree to keep their disappointment quiet as they head to Fire Island for the wedding of Amy's twin, Jo, to Dave. Though determined to put on a brave face, Amy is dealt another blow when she learns that Dave's best man is Emmett, the only person, other than Ben, that Amy ever dated. Amy's fear that Ben will leave her due to the miscarriage leads her to entertain the idea of getting involved with Emmett again as she reevaluates what she wants out of life. Meanwhile, Dave's parents and sister are unimpressed by Jo and her family, adding to the mounting tension. Throughout the propulsive plot, the characters wrestle with big, messy, and complex emotions believably arising from major life events. Chalsen infuses her cast with such depth and personality that, by the end, readers will feel like they really know the characters. This moving outing marks Chalsen as a writer to watch. *Agent: Sabrina Taitz, WME. (Apr.)*

Ana María and the Fox

Liana De La Rosa. Berkley, $17 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-0-593-44088-9

De La Rosa (*On a Midsummer Night*) turns the world of Victorian London's high society upside down with this impressive series launch. In 1863, seeking refuge from the French occupation of Mexico, heiresses Ana María Luna Valdés and her two younger sisters head to London as "goodwill ambassadors." There, Ana María meets Gideon Fox, the son of a Scotsman and a biracial English woman, who has worked hard to gain a position in Parliament and hopes to use his political influence to end the international slave trade. The pair are bonded by mutual attraction and a shared understanding of what it is to be an outsider. When a member of the aristocracy threatens the Luna sisters' safety, Gideon risks his political future to protect them—and love blossoms between him and Ana María. De La Rosa expands the typical purview of a historical romance to explore the impact of global politics without ever losing sight of the love story at the center of the chaos. Ana María's struggle to balance her desire for independence with her thirst for familial approval makes her an especially well-rounded heroine. Readers will be eager for the next Luna sisters romance. *Agent: Rebecca Strauss, DeFiore & Co. (Apr.)*

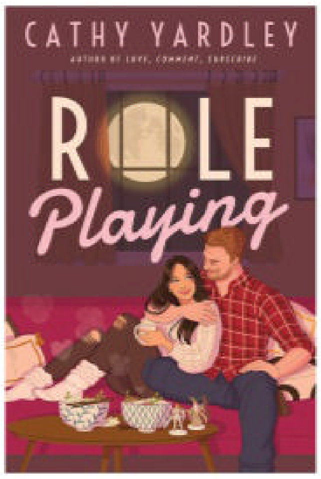
Said No One Ever

Stephanie Eding. Sourcebooks Casablanca, $16.99 trade paper (320p) ISBN 978-1-72823-997-2

At the start of this effervescent rom-com from Eding (*The Unplanned Life of Josie Hale*), Ellie Reed has lost both her relationship and her Ohio medical transcription job. Chaffing under the harsh opinions of family members (especially her perfect older sister), Ellie decides to treat herself to an Airbnb in small-town Montana. But things don't go as planned: her octogenarian hostess, Marilyn Perry, falls and shatters her kneecap immediately before Ellie hits town, leaving Ellie to deal with a menagerie of assorted animals (including two sheep, an ill-behaved dog, and a donkey); a weasely neighbor determined to buy Marilyn's farm out from under her; and Marilyn's hot but grumpy grandson, Warren Oliver. Convalescing Marilyn, meanwhile, is determined to track down the man she once planned to marry and enlists Ellie's aid gaining access to helpful materials hidden throughout her house. Ellie finds purpose in this unexpected new life—and discovers potent chemistry with Warren—but her new normal is threatened when Marilyn's uptight daughters return to town. Marilyn is a hoot, easily stealing every scene she's in, while go-with-the-flow Ellie and rules-follower Warren make a lovely match. It's sunshine in book form. *Agent: Katie Salvo, Metamorphosis Literary. (Apr.)*

★ Role Playing

Cathy Yardley. Montlake, $16.99 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-1-66250-397-9



This delightfully quirky romance from Yardley (*Ex Appeal*) finds divorced, biracial Asian American Maggie, 48, embracing a reclusive lifestyle after her son goes away to college. Emotional trauma—including the death of her parents in a car accident when she was two, being raised by her prejudiced grandmother, and suffering through a loveless marriage—leaves Maggie uncomfortable with IRL relationships. Instead, she finds solace in online gaming, where she can be herself under the screen name BOGWITCH. Like Maggie, 50-year-old Aiden (screen name: OtterLeader) has a fair amount of familial baggage. He lives a solitary life devoted to caring for his elderly, widowed mother. When Maggie joins Aidan's online gaming guild, they quickly become virtual friends, though they have some comical misunderstandings about who exactly is on the other side of the screen. A chance meeting in real-life topples the wall of protection provided by online anonymity—and sparks new feelings. The older leads and their unconventional meet-cute set this rom-com apart. The result is a charming celebration of the many ways connections can develop. *Agent: Tricia Skinner, Fuse Literary. (Apr.)*

The Half of It

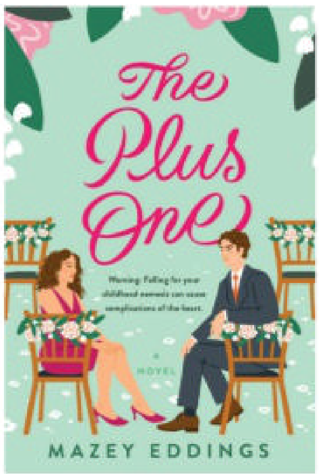
Juliette Fay. Morrow, $17.99 trade paper (400p) ISBN 978-0-06-323596-0

A woman finds closure 40 years after being betrayed by her first love in this lukewarm tale of forgiveness and redemption from Fay (*Catch Us When We Fall*). In 1981, 18-year-old Helen Spencer had what she believed to be a romantic first time with Cal Crosby, only for Cal to return to his girlfriend, leaving Helen with a ruined reputation and chlamydia. Cal has spent decades regretting his actions, and when he sees Helen again, he's desperate to make amends. Now a widow, Helen is ready to let go of the past, and even musters empathy for Cal who, having made work his priority over the years, has reluctantly agreed to an open marriage with his wife. Through alternating timelines, readers learn Helen and Cal's unsurprising history: they were simply too young to understand the possible consequences of their actions. Unfortunately, Fay's handling of sexually transmitted infections feels overwrought and somewhat stigmatizing. Much better done is the present timeline, in which the duo embarks on a friendship as fellow grandparents, often meeting up for playdates and thereby raising concerns with their adult children who spot their lingering love. This tepid second-chance romance has a shaky foundation, but the deep connection between the protagonists rings true. *Agent: Stéphanie Abou, Massie & McQuilkin. (Apr.)*

The Plus One

Mazey Eddings. Griffin, $16.99 trade paper (320p) ISBN 978-1-250-84704-1

Eddings (*Lizzie Blake's Best Mistake*) delivers a heartwarming enemies-to-friends-to-lovers romance between psychiatrist Indira and her brother's best friend. After Indira's boyfriend cheats on her, she takes up temporary residence with big bro Collin and his husband-to-be, Jeremy (her ex-boyfriend's cousin), not knowing that her childhood nemesis, Jude, Collin's bff, is also staying there for five weeks before the wedding, having taken an extended leave from his job as a surgeon with an NGO that operates in conflict zones. As their lifelong playful bickering resumes, both recognize a forbidden attraction to someone they consider off-limits—and realize that the other is in desperate need of emotional support. Indira, who is in therapy to work through abandonment issues, spots the signs of Jude's post-traumatic-stress symptoms from losing patients, while Jude sees Indira's discomfort around her ex at pre-wedding events, and suggests they pretend to be dating for the duration of the wedding. It's a fun combination of tropes, and, as their mutual trust grows, they eventually indulge their attraction in scenes both steamy and humorous. Readers will root for Eddings's protagonists to find both love and healing. *(Apr.)*



Every Bit a Cowboy

Jennie Marts. Sourcebooks Casablanca, $8.99 mass market (360p) ISBN 978-1-72822-616-3

Wounded hearts unite in Mart's sweet and sensual fifth Creedence Horse Rescue romance (after *Never Enough Cowboy*). When Carley Chapman's smarmy ex-husband, Paul, arrives in Creedence, Colo., hoping to win Carley back, Deputy Knox Garrison claims to be her fiancé to protect her from Paul's unrelenting advances. Knox has always had a crush on the pretty, blonde hairdresser, so pretending to be in love isn't much of a stretch. For her part, Carley appreciates Knox's protective streak and can't deny her attraction to the hunky cowboy, but her disastrous marriage made her swear off relationships. The pair have a natural ease with each other, and the line between real and pretend blurs as fake dates lead to steamy nights, regular dinners, and even pet adoption. Though the entire town comes together to cheer on their relationship, neither Carley nor Knox, who both wrestle with abandonment issues, wants to be the first to admit their true feelings. Marts does a fine job imbuing her protagonists with both tenderness and strength, and the matchmaking townsfolk are a hoot. This will set readers' hearts aflutter. *Agent: Nicole Resciniti, Seymour Agency. (Mar.)*

Don't Back Down

Sharon Sala. Sourcebooks Casablanca, $8.99 mass market (432) ISBN 978-1-72825-854-6

Bestseller Sala (*The Next Best Day*) launches a romantic suspense series with an uneven outing that's long on suspense and short on romance. A chance meeting between Rusty Caldwell and Cameron Pope turns into one unforgettable night together, after which both are sure they'll never see each other again. Five years later, undercover FBI agent Rusty is assigned to infiltrate a human trafficking ring in the mountains of Jubilee, Ky., which happens to be both Rusty and Cameron's hometown, though they come from vastly different social strata within it. Recently discharged Army vet Cameron has faced threats against his family ever since returning home, and now his young niece has been kidnapped by the same human traffickers Rusty is hunting. When the pair are reunited, their attraction is as strong as ever, but they must put old feelings and ongoing family feuds on the back burner in hopes of bringing peace to Jubilee. Sala fails to capture chemistry between her leads, whose flirtation reads as corny and underdeveloped. The suspense plot is much more competently handled, with each page delivering thrilling new details that push the plot forward. This one is only for die-hard Sala fans. *Agent: Meredith Bernstein, Meredith Bernstein Literary. (Mar.)*

Comics

Mimosa

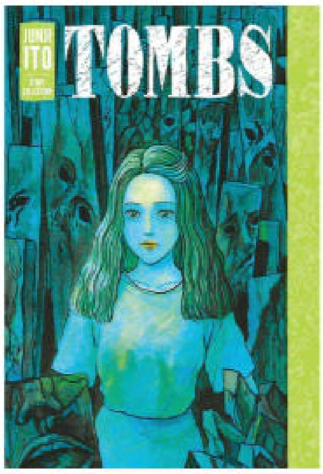
Archie Bongiovanni. Surely, $24.99 (272p) ISBN 978-1-419-75243-8

This waggish comics ensemble piece from Bongiovanni (*Grease Bats*) follows a group of 30-something queer and trans friends, weaving together themes of relationships, parenting, conflict, money, and aging. On the eve of Chris's 40th birthday, the group proposes a queer dance night for the over-30 crowd, which "starts at a reasonable time." These bashes, Grind and Grind 2, act as bookends for the characters' dramas. Chris is an isolated single parent who would rather be working on their erotic novel, *Butt Bottoms at Dinah Shore*. Elise pines for her boss. Jo struggles to balance her youth Queerrr Rock Camp with sex work. Alex, a trans man and apparent starving artist, has a coming-out of sorts when he admits to having a trust fund. The tales are peppered with pitch-perfect moments, as when Chris texts the group chat about their struggles and Jo eye-rollingly replies, "Chris, your stress is so valid," and tosses her phone aside. Cramming in a lot of story lines, Bongiovanni manages to keep up their updated *Dykes to Watch Out For* wit, with looser-lined character design and a touch more schmaltz. Optimism triumphs (friends make up, *Butt Bottoms* finds a publisher). It's a lot of fun to read, and will spark reflection on the importance of making room for all of life's transitions. *Agent: Jim McCarthy, Dystel, Goderich, & Bourret. (Mar.)*

Tombs

Junji Ito, trans. from the Japanese by Jocelyne Allen. Viz, $25 (344p) ISBN 978-1-974736-04-1

This trick-or-treat bag of terror tales from horror master Ito (*Uzumaki*) is spiked with dark humor and dream-logic absurdity. "Tombs" sets the tone, taking place in a town where tombstones sprout spontaneously from the spots where people die, forcing the living residents to navigate streets and home interiors choked with grave markers. In "Clubhouse," teenage girls get possessed by the ghosts of student radicals past ("We can use all the comrades we can get"). "The Strange Tale of the Tunnel" begins as a classic ghost story before taking a sharp turn into bizarre science fiction. "Slug Girl" presents the simple yet profoundly disturbing character of a girl cursed with a slug for a tongue, and the standout "The Bloody Story of Shirosuna" follows a young doctor to a village with a strange relationship with blood. As always, Ito's fine-lined art has an elegant neo-gothic appeal. He fills his pages with moody neighborhoods, pretty girls with haunted eyes, and grotesqueries that range from a massive man-eating sea monster to little floating hair balls that broadcast people's secret thoughts. Though not necessarily the very best work from the prolific, endlessly imaginative artist, this is one of the stronger selections of his short manga, one that Ito's and other horror fans won't want to miss. *(Mar.)*



The Phantom Scientist

Robin Cousin, trans. from the French by Edward Gauvin. MIT, $24.95 (128p) ISBN 978-0-26204-786-9

An elusive scientist claims to solve a landmark mathematical problem and then vanishes in Cousin's intrigue-laden academic thriller. Scientists from assorted disciplines pursue independent research at the Institute for the Study of Complex and Dynamic Systems. The Institute is itself an ongoing experiment, a dynamic system gradually cycling "toward entropy and chaos," which new residents are selected to rebalance. The Institute's director, Mr. Sorokin, hopes the program's latest entrant, Stéphane Douasy, proves a calming ballast, otherwise, Sorokin may be forced to terminate the program. Upon his arrival, Stéphane, along with lab neighbors, investigates the enigmatic figure of the title, Vinaiy Paniandy, a secretive computer scientist claiming to have solved the momentous P vs. NP problem, which presupposes the existence of an algorithm capable of "solving any problem that has a valid solution." Cousin doesn't shy from technical exposition, but tackles theory with a gamer's sense of play. Indeed, the Fibonacci sequence of hexagons that maps the Institute's woodland campus evokes the board game Settlers of Catan, while the squat, stylized character drawings vaguely resemble video game avatars. Cousin adroitly balances an accessible introduction to systems theory with a smart, well-paced mystery, animated by the very concepts he endeavors to explain. To combine mystery and a math comic, it's an elegant solution. *(Feb.)*

Sins of the Black Flamingo

Andrew Wheeler and Travis Moore. Image, $16.99 (120p) ISBN 978-1-5343-2472-5

Eisner Award winner Wheeler (*Another Castle*) teams up with DC artist Moore (the Superman: Son of Kal-El series) for a gloriously, unrelentingly queer urban fantasy-erotica. "Gentleman thief" Sebastian Harlow, alias the Black Flamingo, delights in stealing magical artifacts from the rich, a profession at which he excels thanks to touching a cursed "devil's tooth" that allowed him to see the true rot of humanity. After finding a hottie imprisoned angel during a heist, Harlow experiences peace for the first time gazing at his injured flesh—but even as he finds himself falling in love, the Flamingo and his friends must fend off white supremacists who seek the angel's power for evil uses. Wheeler's storytelling is fast-paced, laden with pathos ("Don't start believing in angels") and political commentary, underpinning a solid adventure tale script. Meanwhile, Moore and talented colorist Tamra Bonvillain blend their effects perfectly, creating neon-drenched Floridian nightclubs and dramatic heist scenes, with characters who interact with authentic sensuality (drawn with some delightful homage to Tom of Finland). For readers of queer romance, and anyone who digs magic and hates bigotry, it's escapism that also feels pleasantly right at home. *(Feb.)*

Nonfiction

The First Lady of World War II: Eleanor Roosevelt's Daring Journey to the Frontlines and Back

Shannon McKenna Schmidt. Sourcebooks, $26.99 (336p) ISBN 978-1-72825-661-0

In this amiable history, freelance writer Schmidt (*Novel Destinations*) documents Eleanor Roosevelt's 1943 mission to visit Allied troops in the Pacific theater of WWII. Concerned that after two years of war U.S. civilians were becoming "dangerously complacent," Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt believed that a trip to the South Pacific, Australia, and New Zealand would help "revive the strong sense of national unity that existed in the dark, shocking days after Pearl Harbor." Schmidt takes readers through Eleanor's exhausting five-week itinerary visiting hospital wards, mess halls, Red Cross facilities, and factories staffed by women workers. Talking with "tongue-tied" soldiers eager for news from the home front, Eleanor soon won over senior military officers who had been averse to the "distraction" of a visit from the first lady; after witnessing "the meticulous way she toured a hospital," Adm. William Halsey did an "about-face" and consented to Eleanor's request to visit Guadalcanal, despite rumors that Japanese troops were "hiding out on the far side of the island." Though the announcement of Eleanor's trip "generated both support and scorn, much of it along political lines," American newspapers covered the tour in detail, and Schmidt suggests that it helped galvanize support for the GI Bill of Rights and other programs to assist returning servicemen. Though somewhat baggy, this sepia-tinged portrait captures the appeal of a pathbreaking first lady. *Agent: Daniel Lazar, Writers House. (May)*

The Forgotten Girls: A Memoir of Friendship and Lost Promise in Rural America

Monica Potts. Random House, $28 (272p) ISBN 978-0-525-51991-1

FiveThirtyEight reporter Potts debuts with a compassionate look at the rapid decline in life expectancy among "the least educated white Americans." In 2015, Potts began returning to her Ozark hometown of Clinton, Ark., to investigate this trend and reconnected with her childhood best friend, Darci Brawner, a single mother of two who had fallen into drug addiction. In the book's first section, "Causes," Potts recounts her teenage years with the free-spirited, caring, and intelligent Darci, and documents how Darci's partying and sexual experimentation drove a wedge between them. By the time Potts gave her high school's valedictory address, Darci had gone through a miscarriage, tried crystal meth, and missed so many days of school that she couldn't graduate. The second half of the narrative, "Effects," is a harrowing chronicle of Darci's downward spiral after high school and Potts's fraught attempts to help her after they reconnected. Throughout, Potts draws on extensive interviews with friends and family to reveal how poverty, generational trauma, substance abuse, and the suffocating righteousness of the evangelical church limit women's options in places like Clinton. It's a potent study of what ails the depressed pockets of rural America. *Agent: Elyse Cheney, Cheney Agency. (Apr.)*

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A 1944 portrait of core Beat generation members (from l.) Hal Chase, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William Burroughs, as seen in Stevan M. Weine's Best Minds *(reviewed on p. 60).*

Grand Delusion: The Rise and Fall of American Ambition in the Middle East

Steven Simon. Penguin Press, $32 (496p) ISBN 978-0-7352-2424-7

Hubris regularly begets disaster in this astringent history of American policy in the Middle East since 1980, in which former State Department official Simon (coauthor of *The Sixth Crisis*) surveys decades of American successes and failures in the region. The latter far outnumber the former and include the Reagan administration's secret, illegal arms sales to Iran; George W. Bush's Iraq War, which led to hundreds of thousands of deaths; Donald Trump's self-defeating repudiation of Obama's Iran nuclear deal, which ended up accelerating Iran's nuclear program; and many feckless stabs at an Israeli-Palestinian peace plan. The author highlights persistent dysfunction in U.S. policy, including a tendency to resort to military coercion, policymakers' rejection of lower-level experts who contradict their theories, and "a superimposition of grand ideas on antithetical Middle Eastern realities." Stocked with sharply etched portraits of statesmen, Simon's narrative elucidates complex issues in pithy, biting prose. (On the Iran-Iraq War: "Equally jarring is the idea that both the United States and the Soviet Union were supporting Iraq only because the prom queen—Iran—had spurned them.") Simon's insider savvy and bracing honesty make for an illuminating take on America's vexed relationship with the region. *(Apr.)*

Nine Black Robes: Inside the Supreme Court's Drive to the Right and Its Historic Consequences

Joan Biskupic. Morrow, $32.99 (432p) ISBN 978-0-0630-5280-2

CNN legal analyst Biskupic (*The Chief*) delivers a thorough analysis of how Donald

Trump's appointment of three conservative justices has changed the Supreme Court. Contending that the appointments "propelled the judiciary into a new period of polarization," Biskupic notes that Neil Gorsuch "stubbornly resisted Court protocols and openly derided [Chief Justice John] Roberts's reasoning in opinions." Brett Kavanaugh's bruising confirmation hearings left him torn between "his allegiance to conservative backers and his desire for acceptance among the legal elites who shunned him," while his friend and fellow Catholic Amy Coney Barrett skillfully deflected questions about her opposition to abortion during her own hearings. The three newcomers emboldened conservative justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito, while undermining the authority of Chief Justice Roberts, an institutionalist who was inclined to seek middle ground with the court's liberal wing. The shift in power quickly led to rulings—on abortion, the separation of church and state, environmental regulation, and gun rights—that "reordered every part of American life," while sending the Court's public approval rating plummeting. Biskupic thoroughly analyzes the headline cases and provides background on the rise of the Federalist Society, the role of White House counsel Don McGahn, and more. Comprehensive and accessible, this is a valuable overview of a profound shift in American jurisprudence. *(Apr.)*

Cleopatra's Daughter: Egyptian Princess, Roman Prisoner, African Queen

Jane Draycott. Liveright, $32.50 (336p) ISBN 978-1-3240-9259-9

Draycott, a lecturer in ancient history at the University of Glasgow, debuts with a lush biography of Cleopatra Selene, the only daughter of Cleopatra VII of Egypt and her lover Mark Antony. Born alongside her twin brother, Alexander Helios, in 40 BCE and raised in Alexandria, Egypt, Cleopatra Selene was rigorously educated in preparation for becoming queen of Egypt. Following her parents' suicides after their defeat at the Battle of Actium, Cleopatra Selene was placed by Roman emperor Octavian in the home of Antony's former wife, Octavia. Though a captive, Cleopatra Selene's pedigree made her an attractive match for a ruler of one of Rome's allied kingdoms, and in 25 BCE she was married to Gaius Julius Juba, son of the deceased king of Numidia. Installed as rulers of the newly created North African kingdom of Mauretania, Cleopatra Selene spent her 20-year reign overseeing the daily business of Mauretania while Juba toured the frontier areas, keeping them secure for the empire. Archaeological discoveries—including the "strikingly innovative" coinage Cleopatra Selene designed and issued during her reign—testify to how she "succeeded quietly" as a ruler. Among other topics, Draycott sheds intriguing light on race and ethnicity in the Roman empire and the opportunities women had to wield power and influence. This peek into the ancient past enthralls. Illus. *(Apr.)*

Queens of a Fallen World: The Lost Women of Augustine's Confessions

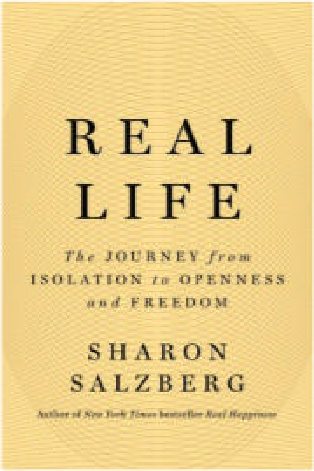
Kate Cooper. Basic, $30 (304p) ISBN 978-1-5416-4601-8

In this intriguing study, historian Cooper (*Band of Angels*) spotlights four women mentioned in St. Augustine's *Confessions*: Roman empress Justina; his mother, Monnica of Thagaste; his mistress, with whom he lived for more than a decade; and his 10-year-old fiancée. (Augustine left the latter two unnamed in the *Confessions*, ostensibly to preserve their dignity; Cooper refers to them as Una ["someone"] and Tacita ["the silent one"], respectively.) Setting Augustine's brief mentions of these women against the backdrop of fourth-century North Africa and Italy, Cooper utilizes Justina's reign as empress and protector for her son, Valentinian II, to discuss the religious and political forces at play near the end of the Roman empire. Augustine's memories of his mother, Monnica, are more intimate, and reveal how Monnica's stories, particularly those involving her enslaved childhood companion, Illa, and "the awkward balance of power that had governed their relationship," helped shape his view of the world. Elsewhere, Cooper rounds out the scant mentions of Una and Tacita in the *Confessions* with discussions of Roman wedding customs, class hierarchies, and more. Though much remains unknown about these women, Cooper persuasively argues that they played a larger role in Augustine's life and work than has previously been understood. It's an eye-opener. *(Apr.)*

Real Life: The Journey from Isolation to Openness and Freedom

Sharon Salzberg. Flatiron, $27.99 (208p) ISBN 978-1-250-83573-4

In this mixed entry, meditation teacher Salzberg (*Real Happiness*) suggests ways for readers to free themselves from a fear-driven "contraction" mindset and enter a freeing "expansion" mindset. The state is based in greater mental flexibility, Salzberg explains, and allows "our fundamentally loving hearts [to] uncoil" and move toward compassion and love. To reach it, one can adopt a mindfulness and meditation practice (she draws on Buddhist teachings throughout), or reflect on personal experiences and morals. Salzberg mines examples from friends, spiritual figures, and popular culture: a scene from the movie *Encanto*, for instance, highlights the importance of love, a key component of the "expansion" mindset (though Salzberg warns against confusing it with "excessive self-sacrifice"). Elsewhere, an overheard comment from Alice Walker speaks to the importance of good-heartedness, and quotes from bell hooks underscore the importance of love as an impetus for positive change. Unfortunately, Salzberg covers too many topics in too cursory a fashion, quickly touching on, among other things, depression, addiction, chronic pain, shame, grief, and EDMR therapy, making for hard-to-follow advice and a sense of narrative disorganization. Those new to Salzberg will find this a tough place to start. *(Apr.)*



So Sorry for Your Loss: How I Learned to Live with Grief, and Other Grave Concerns

Dina Gachman. Union Square, $16.99 trade paper (240p) ISBN 978-1-454-94760-8

Journalist Gachman (*Brokenomics*)

[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH ARLINE GERONIMUS

Worn Out

In *Weathering* (Little, Brown Spark, Apr.; reviewed on p. 57), public health scholar Geronimus examines how racism, classism, and other forms of oppression affect marginalized people's health.

How do you define weathering?

Weathering is a biopsychosocial process whereby oppressed, marginalized, or economically exploited people face structural barriers to survival, let alone to opportunities or resources. They include living with environmental toxins, suffering indignities and interpersonal racism, and having to decide whether to pay for your medications or your food. These chronic stressors erode your health in multiple ways and explain the persistent, entrenched racial inequities in health.

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What led you to the notion of weathering?

The concept really gelled when I looked at risks of poor birth outcomes to Black and white women by age, finding that white women had the highest risk births in their teens, but for Black women that was the lowest risk age. I made it my mission to understand how weathering could be an alternative to conventional wisdom, not just about teen mothers, but about health inequities and individual behavior in poor health. I also saw how my father's stories, my mother's stories, and my grandparents' stories could all be described in the same way. Both my parents came from immigrant families, were working class and low income, and lived through antisemitism. Everything I was learning and describing about Black and Latinx young women and older women and men could be applied to my parents and grandparents.

You suggest that—from a health perspective—teen pregnancy for Black women may not be as bad as it's been made out to be.

As you get older, the risks of childbearing get higher and higher. That's true for white women and Black women, but it starts much earlier for Black women and is far more severe. The medical profession and all of us think being a teen mom is the worst thing you can do and symbolizes all kinds of bad things about you or your family. But weathering research has shown over and over that for Black women, the risks begin in their 20s.

There's some risk readers may be overwhelmed by the systemic causes of weathering and feel like they can't do anything. I suspect you don't want them to read the book this way.

No. I firmly believe there's lots to do that would address and disrupt weathering and hopefully eliminate it. In one sense, it's very daunting to see all the places weathering happens. But it also means anyone can impact how much the environment and their setting, whether it's a school setting, a hospital setting, or a community, will proliferate the stressors that cause weathering. If we move to what I call a weathering lens, the possible solutions will start becoming clearer and we'll start evaluating them and finding ones that work well.

—ROBERT BEAUREGARD

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delivers a poignant, personal exploration of grief. After the author lost her mother to cancer and her sister to alcoholism in the span of two years, she was forced to acknowledge that "grief would become part of me, instead of something I had to conquer." Gachman gets up-close to the emotional vagaries of loss, recounting how, after her mother's death, she'd find herself crying during a Geico commercial one moment, and emotionally numb the next. Both reactions are normal, she writes, as "grief, like life, doesn't always have to make sense." Elsewhere, she discusses how finding reminders of the dead in one's daily life can "keep the love we felt and feel" alive, considers the value (and limitations) of seeking psychological help, and lays out small ways to help others in mourning. Gachman perceptively puts words to the uncomfortable realities of loss—"Death was not glorious and wondrous... it was a blunt object, lurking in the corner"—and deconstructs its social myths, helping readers feel less alone. Those facing loss will find solace here. *(Apr.)*

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The Life Council: 10 Friends Every Woman Needs

Laura Tremaine. Zondervan, $27.99 (224p)
ISBN 978-0-310-36727-7

10 Things to Tell You podcast host Tremaine (*Share Your Stuff. I'll Go First*) takes a perceptive look at female friendship in this bright offering. Popular culture tends to prize romantic relationships, but friendship is "a cornerstone of our health and happiness," argues Tremaine, who here maps out a "Life Council" framework that calls for a balanced, diverse mix of companions and confidantes. Just as effective advisory boards are comprised of members with different perspectives, each friend brings unique value to one's Life Council: the Daily Duty friend "doesn't pause in speaking as she tiptoes around the toys and laundry" littering the floor; the Battle Buddy can uniquely understand a shared struggle; and the Old Friend, who's witnessed bad haircuts and formative life moments, provides the comfort of knowing one's "past iterations." Also important is the "Yes Friend," who's most likely to accept plans, and the "Business Bestie," to provide support at work. The author wraps up with guidance for cultivating healthy friendships (drawing boundaries, sharing difficult emotions) and navigating pain points (drifting apart, money imbalances). Tremaine's exploration of adult friendship is nuanced yet practical, and she's honest about her own friend-related foibles, including failures to communicate and see others' perspectives. This will resonate with women who value their allies and acquaintances alike. *(Apr.)*

The Big Velour: An Illustrated Manifesto of Drag

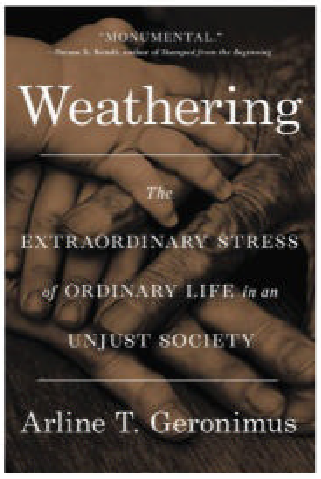
Sasha Velour. Harper, $35 (240p) ISBN 978-0-358-50808-3

In this showstopping debut, Velour, creator of the Brooklyn drag revue *NightGowns* and winner of *RuPaul's Drag Race* season nine, interweaves her autobiography with the cultural history of drag. Placing her own achievements within the context of the gay rights movement and breakthroughs by previous drag artists, Velour recounts how the Stonewall riots and the emergence of queer theory and grassroots LGBTQ community movements in the 1980s and '90s influenced the creation of *NightGowns* and her zine *Velour*. Elsewhere, memories of lip-syncing to Whitney Houston's "So Emotional" on *RuPaul's Drag Race* lead to a study of gender-inclusive theater in China and Japan, and profiles of 1920s drag aerialist Barbette, who "flew into the air like an 'angel, a flower, a bird' (as Jean Cocteau put it), draped in white ostrich with a platinum finger wave"; José Sarria, winner of San Francisco's "first big drag pageant"; and Josephine Baker. Velour seamlessly mixes rigorous scholarship with inspirational aphorisms ("Beautiful relationships don't need to last forever to make deep shifts in your life") and heartfelt anecdotes about finding community and navigating the pitfalls of mainstream success, while enriching the narrative with copious photographs and illustrations. This is a rousing tribute to a revolutionary art form and its practitioners. *(Apr.)*

★ Weathering: The Extraordinary Stress of Ordinary Life in an Unjust Society

Arline T. Geronimus. Little, Brown Spark, $30 (368p) ISBN 978-0-316-25797-8

Neither genetic differences nor unhealthy lifestyles are at the root of racial health disparities in the U.S., according to this powerhouse study. Geronimus, a professor of public health at the University of Michigan, instead places the blame on "the physiological effects of living in marginalized communities that bear the brunt of racial, ethnic, religious, and class discrimination." Labeling these effects as "weathering," Geronimus documents how the struggles to earn a living wage, to find affordable and safe housing, and to access decent healthcare weaken the immune systems of poor and marginalized people and cascade into early-onset chronic diseases and shortened life expectancies. For people of color, professional success is no refuge, as the effort required to be upwardly mobile and vigilant in the face of systemic discrimination has long-term negative health consequences. Throughout, Geronimus uncovers and forcefully critiques harmful narratives in healthcare and social policy, including an "exaggerated" emphasis on the benefits of postponing childbearing (which puts Black mothers, in particular, at greater risk for "poor birth outcomes") and "age-washing" (which presupposes that there is "a universally uniform growth and aging process" and discounts the effects of racism and classism). Impassioned and persuasive, this is an essential call for change. *(Mar.)*



The Transcendent Brain: Spirituality in the Age of Science

Alan Lightman. Pantheon, $26 (208p) ISBN 978-0-593-31741-9

Science and spirituality converge in this probing examination of humanity's connection to the divine. Physicist Lightman (*Probable Impossibilities*) contends that "some human experiences are simply not reducible to zeros and ones" and draws on philosophy and science to suggest that materialism and spirituality are compatible. He digs into the history of both perspectives, noting that 18th-century philosopher Moses Mendelssohn believed a soul must exist to integrate the different parts of the human body into a cohesive experience and that, on the other end of the spectrum, Roman philosopher Titus Lucretius Carus argued "everything that happens in the world... originates from the movement and properties of physical atoms, not the gods." Reconciling these opposing views, Lightman broaches the possibility that spirituality could be evolutionarily beneficial, with the need to feel part of "something larger than one's self" impelling early humans to cooperate and the appreciation of transcendent beauty stemming from beauty's role in sexual attraction. The prose is reflective and lyrical, and Lightman's arguments succeed in walking the fine line between honoring spiritual experiences without lapsing into pseudoscience. Thoughtful and intellectually rigorous, this treatise impresses. *(Mar.)*

Your Brain on Art: How the Arts Transform Us

Susan Magsamen and Ivy Ross. Random House, $30 (304p) ISBN 978-0-593-44923-3

Art will heal what ails you, according to this scattershot treatise on aesthetics and well-being. Johns Hopkins neurologist Magsamen (*Family Stories*) and Ross, Google's vice president of hardware design, draw on scientific studies to explain how making and appreciating art, music, dance, theater, and writing affect the brain and promote health. Some of the applications the authors highlight intrigue, such as the success of dance classes in helping Parkinson's patients improve movement and singing classes in hastening new mothers' recovery from postpartum depression. Other benefits are more modest and unsurprising: adult coloring books reduce stress and anxiety, and group dancing fosters social bonding. There's disappointingly sparse insight on neuroscience, as well. For instance, when the authors note that "poetry activates brain areas such as the posterior cingulate cortex and medial temporal lobes," which "intensify emotions," the unsurprising takeaway is that poetry elicits an emotional response. Elsewhere, the scientific discussions sometimes edge toward new age mysticism, as when the authors write that the "notes C and G... resonate with the Earth's core frequency and are known to be soothing vibrations.” This somewhat obvious brief comes up short. Photos. *(Mar.)*

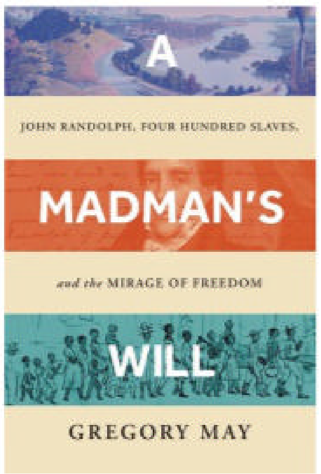
Gentleman Bandit: The True Story of Black Bart, the Old West’s Most Infamous Stagecoach Robber

John Boessenecker. Hanover Square, $32.99 (352p) ISBN 978-1-335-44942-9

The real man behind a Wild West legend is revealed in this immersive chronicle from bestseller Boessenecker (*Wildcat*). Credited with 29 stagecoach robberies in northern California in the 1870s and ’80s, Charles E. Boles, better known as “Black Bart,” was born in 1829 in England and immigrated with his family to New York the following year. After failing to strike it rich in the California gold rush, he met and married Mary Elizabeth Johnson in Iowa; the couple eventually had three daughters and a son. Boles struggled to make it as a farmer, however, and after serving in the Union Army during the Civil War, he abandoned his family and headed west, drifting between Montana, Nevada, and Utah before returning to California, where he began his life of crime. Targeting Wells Fargo stagecoaches, Boles—wearing a flour sack mask and armed with a double-barreled shotgun—would politely ask the driver to throw down the strongbox and mail pouch. Twice, he left behind scraps of poetry signed “Black Bart, the Po8.” Distinguished by his “gentlemanly demeanor” and disinterest in robbing passengers, Boles was a favorite of California newspapers, who helped spread the myth that he was “a sort of modern Robin Hood.” Caught in 1883 after a silk handkerchief he left at the scene of a robbery was traced back to him, Boles served four years in San Quentin prison, then robbed at least three more coaches before disappearing in 1888. Scrupulously researched and smoothly written, this is an entertaining slice of Americana. Illus. *(Mar.)*

★ A Madman’s Will: John Randolph, Four Hundred Slaves, and the Mirage of Freedom

Gregory May. Liveright, $30 (384p) ISBN 978-1-324-09221-6



Lawyer-turned-historian May (*Jefferson’s Treasure*) offers a fascinating account of Virginia senator John Randolph’s posthumous efforts to free nearly 400 enslaved people and provide for their resettlement. A “relentless defender of states’ rights,” Randolph (1773–1833) was one of Virginia’s largest slaveholders, and his “deathbed declaration” that his slaves must be freed took many by surprise. After Randolph’s death, however, executors discovered two wills—an 1821 version that freed his slaves and an 1832 version that left his estate to his niece’s infant son and made no mention of manumission. Much legal wrangling ensued, with some of Randolph’s heirs seeking to have the 1821 will set aside by proving that Randolph was “mad” when he wrote it. (Randolph’s executor, Judge William Leigh, wanted the 1832 will set aside for similar reasons.) Though the 1821 will was eventually upheld, the story has an unhappy ending—before the freedmen could settle on land purchased on their behalf in Mercer County, Ohio, they were expelled from the county by a white mob and their community was dispersed. May lucidly untangles the legal proceedings and draws vivid character sketches of Randolph and others, while building an irrefutable case that freedom is only the first step to equality. This is history at its finest. Illus. *(Apr.)*

Guardians of the Valley: John Muir and the Friendship That Saved Yosemite

Dean King. Scribner, $30 (480p) ISBN 978-1-982144-46-3

Bestseller King (*Skeletons on the Zahara*) probes the transformative partnership between a writer and an editor in this sparkling history. Naturalist John Muir, “the father of our national parks, founder of the Sierra Club, and spiritual leader of the environmental movement,” began working with *Century Magazine* editor Robert Underwood Johnson in 1877, but they didn’t meet in person until 1889, when they traveled from San Francisco to “the holy temple” of Yosemite Valley, where Muir’s “enthrallment with nature… his belief in its worth, power, and sacredness” had “crystallize[d]” 20 years earlier. But when Muir and Johnson visited, they saw a landscape devastated by damming, logging, grazing, mining, and tourism. Launching a preservation movement, the two “moved a mountain of greed and apathy” to have Yosemite declared a national park but lost the battle to save one of its most beautiful sections, Hetch Hetchy Valley, from being flooded to provide water to San Francisco. King vividly chronicles Muir’s evolution from “self-styled hobo” to forceful activist, goaded and nurtured by the “urbane” Johnson, and weaves in intriguing vignettes of Theodore Roosevelt, *Poetry* magazine founder Harriet Monroe, and others, as well as rhapsodic descriptions of the Sierra Nevada landscape. Fans of Ken Burns’s *The National Parks* documentary will cherish this inspired account of how an American treasure was saved. Photos. *(Mar.)*

The Mercenary: A Story of Brotherhood and Terror in the Afghanistan War

Jeffrey E. Stern. PublicAffairs, $30 (352p) ISBN 978-1-5417-0245-5

In this ambitious yet flawed dual memoir, journalist Stern (*The 15:17 to Paris*) chronicles his and his driver’s experiences during and after the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan. Portraying himself as a wannabe reporter who “kept failing and advancing to the next level anyway,” Stern recounts how he paid his own way to Afghanistan in 2007 and fortuitously hired Aimal, who “somehow knew before everyone else when a bomb had gone off and where.” The first third of narrative is told from Stern’s perspective, detailing the scrapes he got into and out of with Aimal's help between 2007 and 2011. The vantage point then shifts, documenting Aimal's childhood in Kabul, his arms dealing during the U.S. occupation, and his escape to Canada in 2011. The final section, which seesaws back-and-forth between Stern and Aimal's perspectives, culminates in their separate efforts to help people escape Kabul during the U.S. withdrawal and Stern's assistance in Aimal's reconciliation with his wife. Though Stern candidly admits to "self-absorption" and "misperceptions," he still casts Aimal mainly in a sidekick role, and the differences between their versions of events are subtle, giving the narrative a somewhat repetitive feel. This aims high but falls short. *Agent: David Larabell, Creative Artists Agency. (Mar.)*

More than a Glitch: Confronting Race, Gender, and Ability Bias in Tech

Meredith Broussard. MIT, $26.95 (240p)
ISBN 978-0-262-04765-4

"The biases embedded in technology are more than mere glitches; they're baked in from the beginning," argues Broussard (*Artificial Intelligence*), a data journalism professor at New York University, in this scathing polemic. Telling the stories of individuals from marginalized communities who have been wronged by technology, the author shows how design and conceptual failures produce unfair outcomes. She describes how a Black man was arrested by Detroit police because a facial recognition algorithm incorrectly flagged him as a match for a shoplifter, reflecting the tendency of such programs to produce false matches for people of color, who are underrepresented in the images used to train those programs. Other case studies are Kafkaesque, such as the Black Chicago man who was shot twice under suspicion of being a snitch because police cars frequently parked outside his house after predictive policing software identified him as at risk for gun violence. The author condemns "technochauvinism," or the belief that "computational solutions [are] superior to all other solutions," as exemplified by the story of a Deaf Apple Store employee who was denied an on-site interpreter because Apple preferred alternative, inadequate solutions that used its products. The stories enrage and drive home the cost of the failures and prejudices built into ostensibly cutting-edge programs. This sobering warning about the dangers of technology alarms and unsettles. *(Mar.)*

★ Ghosts of the Orphanage: A Story of Mysterious Deaths, a Conspiracy of Silence, and a Search for Justice

Christine Kenneally. PublicAffairs, $30 (384p)
ISBN 978-1-5417-5851-3

Journalist Kenneally (*The Invisible History of the Human Race*) paints a beyond disturbing picture of human cruelty in this shocking exposé of decades of abuse of children housed in orphanages across multiple countries in much of the 20th century. In thousands of institutions in the U.S., Canada, England, Ireland, Australia, and other countries, as documented by official inquiries and corroborated by Kenneally's research, children were routinely emotionally abused, beaten for falling asleep during punitive nighttime exercises, whipped, submerged in baths, raped, and even killed. Those crimes were routinely concealed by their perpetrators or their colleagues, "who sought to protect them or the reputation of their" institution, most of which were religious. Kenneally shares the stories of such individuals as Sally Dale, who, while at Vermont's St. Joseph's Orphanage as a child in 1944, "witnessed a nun throw a boy through an upper-floor window to his death," and was herself "thrown into Lake Champlain and told to swim or drown" around the same time. Kenneally asserts that her exposé pertains "to acts that are happening right now," and that the grim reality is a product of an insufficient reckoning, since "organizations that ran orphanages still deny the full reality of what happened inside them, still refuse to take true responsibility for the consequences, and still sit on the records." This harrowing true crime story is essential, if deeply difficult, reading. *Agent: Jay Mandel, WME. (Mar.)*

Against the Seas: Saving Civilization from Rising Waters

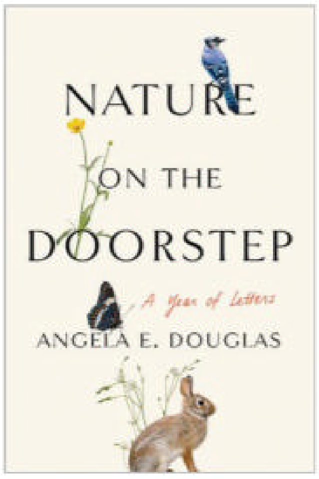
Mary Soderstrom. Dundurn, $21.99 trade paper (296p) ISBN 978-1-4597-5048-7

Soderstrom (*Concrete*) investigates the consequences of rising sea levels in this prosaic outing. Exploring how societies across the globe are dealing with rising water levels, she focuses on regions most threatened by climate change, describing Indonesia's decision in 2019 to "move its capital from the climate-threatened megalopolis of Jakarta to the sparsely populated island of Borneo" and Bangladesh's efforts to preserve the large mangrove forest that helps protect the city of Dhaka from flooding. She details China's plans to insulate Shanghai from climate change, which include erecting a tidal barrier on the Yangtze River and reducing "population pressure" by building a new satellite city with green patches that will allow water to "easily percolate back into the earth." She advocates for adopting "low-tech approaches and a couple of very high-tech ones," including retreating from at-risk areas and expanding nuclear power to reduce carbon emissions. The historical material on ancient flood myths and the now-sunken land bridge that once connected Britain and the Netherlands doesn't add much to the discussion of how contemporary humans might respond to climate change, and the case studies are serviceable if somewhat perfunctory, relying on extant research without bringing much new to the table. The result is a humdrum survey that meets its modest ambitions. *(Mar.)*

Nature on the Doorstep: A Year of Letters

Angela E. Douglas. Comstock, $19.95 trade paper (256p) ISBN 978-1-5017-6811-8

In these pleasant dispatches, entomologist Douglas (*Insects and Their Beneficial Microbes*) collects the weekly newsletters she wrote for her family in the U.K. about the flora and fauna in her yard in Ithaca, N.Y., during the first year of Covid-19 lockdowns. The pandemic goes largely unmentioned, with Douglas instead offering winding reflections about the natural phenomena she spots each week, as when she notes a web on her back deck and describes how caterpillars and spiders produce



silk. Other letters explain that stink bugs like to winter in wooden houses because they're attracted to the dry "cracks and crevices" and that crab spiders hide in goldenrod plants to sneak up on the bees and butterflies that frequent them. However, most entries emphasize naturalistic observation over scientific explication, such as when the author ranks the flowering trees on her property and details the daily routine of a red squirrel that lives in her spruce trees. Filled with wide-eyed wonder, the lighthearted letters charm, though some readers may be disappointed by the thin scientific background. Still, this has plenty to offer those looking to discover the magic in one's own backyard. *(Mar.)*

Incarnation and Metamorphosis: Can Literature Change Us?

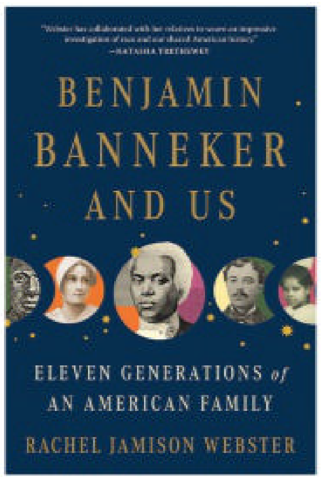
David Mason. Paul Dry, $19.95 trade paper (226p) ISBN 978-1-58988-172-3

Poet Mason (*Pacific Light*) opines on the transformative power of literature in these thought-provoking essays. "The values of literature—verbal precision, beauty, and the courage to face life in all its variety and ambiguity—are worth holding, and are perhaps even civilizing in the rigor and compassion they demand of us," Mason contends. Positing that literature encourages readers to suspend judgment so as to see the humanity of others, Mason unpacks W.B. Yeats's "Easter, 1916" to show how the narrator moves from irreverence toward respect for Irish rebels over the course of the poem, illustrating how one might exercise compassion toward those with whom one disagrees. A standout chapter on Sylvia Plath and Seamus Heaney probes how fame turns writers into public symbols that can obscure the nuances of their character. Other selections consider the relationship between politics and literature in the poetry of Claudia Rankine and Kay Ryan, as well as how Pablo Neruda's personal life affects how readers approach his work. Mason's sharp interpretations make a persuasive case that great literature's complexity and ambiguity can, at its best, produce empathy and understanding in readers. Book lovers will find much to ponder. *(Mar.)*

★ Benjamin Banneker and Us: Eleven Generations of an American Family

Rachel Jamison Webster. Holt, $28.99 (368p) ISBN 978-1-250-82730-2

Poet Webster (*Mary Is a River*) offers a stunning meditation on race, identity, and achievement. At a family reunion in 2016, Webster, who is white, discovered that she was related to Benjamin Banneker (1731–1806), the African American mathematician, almanac publisher, and astronomer who helped to survey Washington, D.C. Setting out to investigate this open secret (in census records, one branch of the family had M next to their names for "mulatto"), Webster details Banneker's accomplishments, including the publication of his "fervent and eloquent" letter to Thomas Jefferson "accus[ing] the Founding Fathers of committing the most criminal act by perpetuating slavery." Webster also sketches the lives of Banneker's grandmother, Molly, an English dairymaid who was sentenced to indentured servitude in Maryland; his grandfather, Bana'ka, who was kidnapped in West Africa and enslaved; and his mother, Mary, who appears to have successfully petitioned the Maryland courts to free her eldest daughter from indentured servitude in 1731. While Webster does not shy away from the uglier aspects of this history, including the sexual exploitation of working-class and enslaved women, a sense of optimism pervades, and her expansive imagination and fluid prose bring these historical figures to life. It's an enthralling and clear-eyed celebration of America's multiracial past and present. *(Mar.)*



Best Minds: How Allen Ginsberg Made Revolutionary Poetry from Madness

Stevan M. Weine. Fordham Univ., $34.95 (304p) ISBN 978-1-5315-0266-9

In this revealing study, psychiatry professor Weine (*Testimony After Catastrophe*) explores the role of mental illness in the poetry of Allen Ginsberg (1926–1997). "Allen's poetics involved a lifelong imaginative and hopeful reworking of many different experiences of mental illness and madness," Weine contends, interpreting Ginsberg's poems through the lens of his personal life. Drawing on Ginsberg's archives and psychiatric records, Weine offers a close reading of doctors' notes from Ginsberg's 10-month stay at the New York State Psychiatric Institute in 1949 while the poet was an undergrad at Columbia and suggests that Ginsberg's time there led him to see madness as simultaneously "damaging" and "liberating." Weine posits that Ginsberg's relationship with his schizophrenic mother, Naomi, fundamentally shaped his views on mental illness, especially Ginsberg's guilt over signing off on Naomi's lobotomy and his rendering of her struggle as a "heroic battle" in his "Kaddish for Naomi Ginsberg." The author brings nuance to Allen's views on mental illness, arguing that Allen had more ambivalent feelings about the antipsychiatry movement than one might expect, and the author's privileged access to material on the poet's and Naomi's institutionalizations make this a valuable resource for future biographers. Fans of the Beat Generation will be enlightened. *(Mar.)*

Everything I Never Wanted to Know

Christine Hume. Mad Creek, $19.95 trade paper (184p) ISBN 978-0-8142-5862-0

Hume (*Saturation Project*), an English professor at Eastern Michigan University, delivers unflinching reflections on the discrediting of and sexual violence against women. Her winding meditations weave personal anecdotes into broader social narratives, as in the essay, "Question Like a Face," in which she recounts moving into a new house the same week a stranger raped her neighbor and muses about the stickers posted around town depicting a woman who was killed in her home by police officers responding to a domestic violence call, highlighting the fragility of domestic safety for women. In "Riot and Run," Hume condemns the "trivialization of women's anger" and argues that the women who tore up storefronts in response to nylon legwear shortages in 1945 were rallying "against profit-mongering, lying producers." In the collection's high point, "All the Women I Know," Hume advocates for understanding women's bodily autonomy through diverse stories, describing her own abortions and highlighting the continuities between the experiences of other women with repetition of the ironic mantra "No woman I know": "No woman I know was alone on the swings when it happened." The heavy subject matter makes for tough but rewarding reading, and the prose is at turns elliptical, poetic, and powerful. It's a dauntless and harrowing indictment of patriarchal violence. *(Mar.)*

The Lyric Essay as Resistance: Truth from the Margins

Edited by Zoë Bossiere and Erica Trabold. Wayne State Univ., $24.99 trade paper (224p) ISBN 978-0-8143-4960-1

In this exciting compendium, Bossiere and Trabold collect essays on identity by writers from marginalized communities. The editors define the lyric essay as a "form-between-forms" that forgoes prose conventions "in favor of embracing more liminal styles," and the deeply personal contributions showcase the variety the form has to offer. In "Dreaming of Ramadi in Detroit," Aisha Sabatini Sloan contemplates her multiracial family and likens the U.S. occupation of Iraq to the 2014 police violence against protestors in Ferguson, Mo., by recounting CNN clips she's caught on airport TVs. Many of the contributions embrace experimental formats, such as Lillian-Yvonne Bertram's "World Maps," in which text boxes positioned at drastic angles containing poem-like fragments reflect on Bertram's burgeoning awareness as a child that she was biracial and lesbian. Danielle Geller's "Annotating the First Page of the First Navajo–English Dictionary" is similarly adventurous, poignantly considering intergenerational trauma through autobiographical footnotes to a list of English translations of Navajo words. The inventive formats dazzle, finding novel ways to drive home each piece's message and testifying to the rewards found when writers are willing to break the rules. These selections exemplify the profound possibilities inherent in the lyric essay. *(Mar.)*

Funny, You Don't Look Funny: Judaism and Humor from the Silent Generation to Millennials

Jennifer Caplan. Wayne State Univ., $36.99 trade paper (188p) ISBN 978-0-8143-4731-7

This perceptive debut from Caplan, a Judaic studies professor at the University of Cincinnati, examines how "Jewish satire and American Judaism have interacted over the last half century." Unpacking the works of Woody Allen, Rachel Bloom, and Nathan Englander, among others, Caplan argues that some Jewish authors of the Silent Generation, exemplified by Joseph Heller, displayed in their fiction an irreverence toward the faith while figures such as Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth demonstrated concern with Jewish people's ambivalence about their heritage. Baby boomers, Caplan contends, served as a bridge between these sensibilities and those of Generation X, who tend to be skeptical of Jewish identity, as illustrated by Larry David's depictions of the faithful as "liars and hypocrites" on his TV show *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. The discussion of millennial Jewish humor is more disjointed and offers fewer takeaways, among them the observation that younger Jewish people "are moving away from Israel and the Holocaust as the touchstones" of Judaism. The wide-ranging analysis skillfully synthesizes cultural themes from novels, films, and tweets, while the insightful takes illuminate what it means to be Jewish in America. The result is a discerning perspective on the recent evolution of American Jewish identity. *(Mar.)*

Second Lives: Black-Market Melodramas and the Reinvention of Television

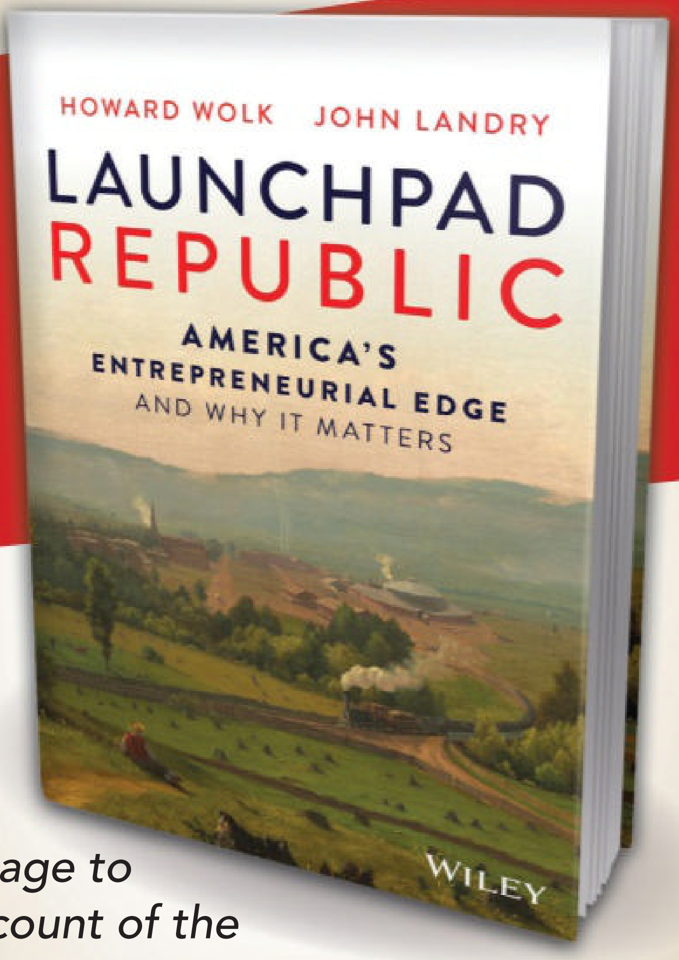
Michael Szalay. Univ. of Chicago, $32.50 trade paper (336p) ISBN 978-0-226-82480-2

In this sharp study, Szalay (*Hip Figures*),

Launchpad Republic is the definitive yet easy-to-read story of how entrepreneurship evolved in America.

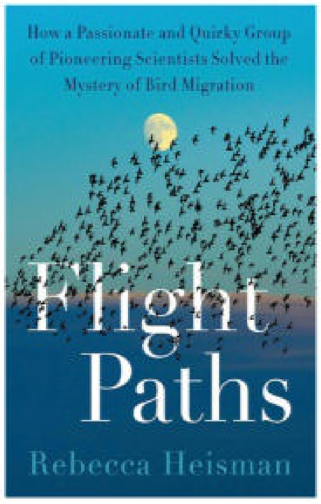
"The work as a whole is truly magisterial in its detail; [yet] the authors somehow manage to combine a granular account of the country's entrepreneurial history with a general synopsis of its philosophical foundations."
– Kirkus Review

www.launchpadrepublic.com



★ Flight Paths: How a Passionate and Quirky Group of Pioneering Scientists Solved the Mystery of Bird Migration

Rebecca Heisman. Harper, $30 (288p) ISBN 978-0-06-316114-6



Science writer Heisman debuts with a winning examination of the seasonal movements of birds, tracing how scientific understanding of bird migration has evolved and detailing the technologies that ornithologists employ to study them today. Highlighting improbable theories proposed throughout history, she notes that Aristotle believed some "winter and summer residents were in fact the same birds in different plumages," a 16th-century Swedish priest thought swallows hibernated at the bottom of lakes, and an English minister postulated that birds wintered on the moon. Contemporary scientists, the author notes, track flocks via radar and search for clues about where a bird traveled from by analyzing deuterium ("a very special type of hydrogen atom") isotopes in feathers and matching them to regional variations in deuterium levels. She profiles the ornithologists behind these advances and tells how, for instance, evolutionary biologist Thomas Smith built on genome-sequencing technology to map genetic variation in warblers, finding that distinct genetic groups follow different migratory routes. Heisman pulls off the impressive feat of making technical discussions of genome sequencing and isotope analysis accessible, and the profiles offer revealing glimpses into the process and production of scientific knowledge. Admirers of Scott Weidensaul's *A World on the Wing* will find this a treat. *(Mar.)*

an English and film professor at the University of California, Irvine, examines the theme of black markets in prestige television. He contends that such "black-market melodramas" as *The Sopranos*, *Orange Is the New Black*, and *Breaking Bad* are "allegories of deindustrialization and the erosion of separate spheres" of work and home life, the collapse of which the shows' characters attempt to reverse by creating secret second lives engaged in informal economies. In Tony Soprano's nostalgia for an idealized notion of the nuclear family, Szalay sees an exemplification of critical theorist Walter Benjamin's "mourning play," which describes "a forced, stagey effort to endow a fallen world with some transcendent meaning." "Worries that housework and paid managerial work have become the same" loom large in black-market melodramas, the author posits, pointing to the suburban housewife protagonist of *Weeds* who involves her family in her illegal marijuana business. Though readers who haven't seen the shows discussed might feel underserved by the brief plot summaries, the shrewd analysis excels at distilling implicit themes in the entertainment landscape. Media scholars will want to check this out. *(Mar.)*

Litcomix: Literary Theory and the Graphic Novel

Adam Geczy and Jonathan McBurnie. Rutgers Univ., $29.95 trade paper (270p) ISBN 978-1-978828-65-0

"Can there be a theory of the graphic novel that is commensurate with literary theory?" ask Geczy (*The Artificial Body in Fashion and Art*), an art professor at the University of Sydney, and McBurnie, director of the Rockhampton Museum of Art, in this thoughtful if discursive defense of comics. Answering in the affirmative, the authors provide close readings of comics by Nina Bunjevac, the Hernandez brothers, and Simon Hanselmann, among others, while establishing a methodology for evaluating graphic novels as literary works—though the extended discourse on such theorists as Fredric Jameson and G.W.F. Hegel sometimes loses sight of the ostensible focus on graphic novels, despite yielding some astute insights. For instance, the authors suggest that György Lukács's theory of the novel reveals how such comics as *The Boys* and *Watchmen* depict the "interplay between heroism and madness... writ large." The authors fare better in their close readings, as when they contend that influential Marvel artist Jack Kirby's speedy drawing habits contributed to the propulsive "narrative tempo" of his works, or that the bathetic comics of Robert Crumb subvert the traditional "rousing ending" of the bildungsroman. Though the dry, academic prose lacks the excitement of the works discussed, this makes a persuasive case for the artistic integrity of graphic novels. *(Mar.)*

Working to Restore: Harnessing the Power of Regenerative Business to Heal the World

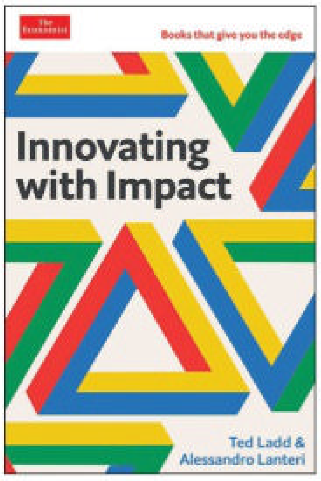
Esha Chhabra. Beacon, $29.95 (248p) ISBN 978-0-8070-0851-5

Business "is a powerhouse that can steer the economy and consumer behavior, and the impact all that has on Mother Earth, in a direction for the better," contends journalist Chhabra in her optimistic debut. She showcases companies that have developed ethical business models by prioritizing their "two major stakeholders": Earth and its people. She profiles Barb Stegemann, founder of the Canadian 7 Virtues perfume company, whose insistence on developing a supply chain that offered dignity to all parties led her to contract with a rose blossom farmer in Afghanistan who desperately needed the financing after his orchard was devastated by warlords. Other businesses include a coffee company that pays high dividends to its Nicaraguan women employees, whose labor harvesting and processing coffee beans otherwise often goes unpaid; hoteliers whose facilities and tours of Flåm, Norway, provide eco-friendly alternatives to the cruise ships that pass through the town; and Indian engineers who developed a low-cost anemia diagnosis device for the country's underserved rural population. Though Chhabra is clear-eyed about the broad, systemic changes needed to bring about a more just world, the uplifting stories she highlights show how individuals might create more equitable possibilities within the current system. Readers will be inspired. *(Mar.)*

Innovating with Impact

Ted Ladd and Alessandro Lanteri. Economist, $26.95 (288p) ISBN 978-1-63936-361-2

Ladd, an entrepreneurship professor at Hult International Business School, and Lanteri (*Clever*), a strategy professor at ESCP Business School, deliver solid advice on entrepreneurship. For inspiration on how to improve one's business, the authors recommend the four tiers of their "Innovation Pyramid": mindset, methods, themes, and impact. The "innovator's mindset," Ladd and Lanteri contend, embraces taking risks, acting competitively, and being confident, independent, and open to feedback. A five-step process for coming up with original ideas suggests that readers determine the concerns of prospective customers, define what they will seek to gain from one's product or service, brainstorm ideas on how to provide that, develop prototypes, and then test the product on customers. The authors highlight "themes" that many contemporary innovations share, and explain that, for example, Nespresso's decision to sell low-cost coffee machines that use single-use coffee pods with high profit margins is representative of the "innovative pricing" trend. The recommendations are useful and smart, even if Ladd and Lanteri's fondness for diagrams, frameworks, and self-tests has the dubious benefit of making the straightforward advice appear abstruse (a graph of the "three horizons framework" overcomplicates the insight that businesses must expand as they age). Still, this eye-opening manual has its fair share of worthy ideas. *(Mar.)*



Religion/Spirituality

Vengeance Is Mine: The Mountain Meadows Massacre and Its Aftermath

Richard E. Turley Jr. and Barbara Jones Brown. Oxford Univ., $34.95 (448p) ISBN 978-0-19-539785-7

Turley (*In the Hands of the Lord*), former assistant historian of the Church of Latter-day Saints, and Jones Brown, director of Signature Books, deliver a meticulous history of the Mountain Meadows Massacre and its decades-long consequences. In September 1857, members of the Latter-day Saint community of southern Utah killed more than 100 travelers en route from Arkansas to California, sparing only 17 children. Turley and Jones Brown tease out the tensions that incited the massacre—fears of federal invasion of the territory, general animosity between the Mormon community and the state—and recount the eventual murder trial of John D. Lee in 1874. Lee and others denied any involvement and blamed local Paiutes for the murders; meanwhile, federal authorities were hampered by a lack of funds. In the end, only Lee was convicted in a complicated series of trials that aimed to disenfranchise Mormons amid rising anti-polygamy sentiment. Though sometimes bogged down by dense, dry prose, the authors draw revelatory links between local effects of the massacre and national anxieties about religion and political volatility, giving readers a comprehensive, complex understanding of the era. This should become the definitive account of the Mountain Meadows Massacre and its fallout. *(May)*

Living Theravada: Demystifying the People, Places, and Practices of a Buddhist Tradition

Brooke Schedneck. Shambhala, $24.95 trade paper (272p) ISBN 978-1-61180-971-8

Schedneck (*Religious Tourism in Northern Thailand*), a Rhodes College religious studies professor, skillfully surveys contemporary Theravada Buddhism. Focusing on communities in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand, Schedneck examines the experiences of monks and laity in three broad sections: people, practices, and sacred places and objects. Schedneck first explores the significance of Buddhist temples as sacred spaces and community centers, where monks and laity interact on a daily basis as well as during structured rituals. She also engages the sect's gender dynamics: men can ordain as monks, while it's more complicated for women, who may become "precept nuns," though the role lacks the "rules, structure, or respect" of "a full monastic life." Meanwhile, the practices section explains "merit-making activities," in which the benefit from doing good is transferred from monks to laypeople through rituals or festivals. ("Monks represent a field of merit, while laity plant seeds in this field," the author explains.) Appendices offer a list of different meditation centers and outline temple etiquette. Schedneck's take is richly nuanced without sacrificing clarity, making for an entry that's useful for Buddhism students and scholars. Readers will welcome this considered offering. *(Apr.)*

Disobedient God: Trusting a God Who Goes Off-Script

Albert Tate. Faithwords, $26 (208p) ISBN 978-1-54-600056-3

Tate (*How We Love Matters*), founding pastor of Fellowship Church in California, invites believers to wrestle with their emotions when God deviates from expectations in this missable offering. While responses to a "disobedient" God can include "replacing" him with earthly distractions, emotionally withdrawing, or "performing" good to win his favor, Tate encourages readers to "be okay with not being okay" while trusting divine providence. The author utilizes scriptural narratives (Jonah fleeing from God, for example), personal anecdotes (dealing with a friend's suicide attempt), and frequent rhetorical questions to urge readers to examine the staunchness of their faith. Having helped those struggling with God's sovereignty, Tate offers generally familiar solutions, among them confessing one's sins, reaching for God in moments of stress, and leaning on fellow believers for support. While some readers will appreciate Tate's approachable writing style and encouraging tone, the author tends to repeat himself, and his strategy of deriving large chunks of his argument from a single word in scripture sometimes sacrifices more substantive dialogue.

Though emotionally cathartic, this doesn't bring much new to the table. *(Apr.)*

She Reigns: Conquering Your Triggers, Fears, and Worries with God's Truth

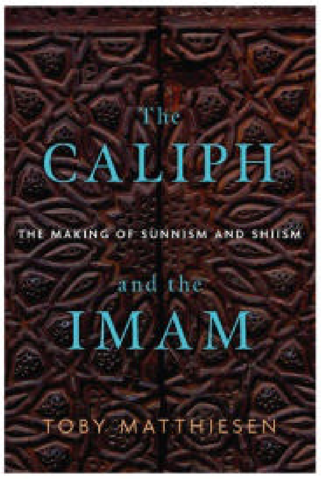
Tarah-Lynn Saint-Elien. Revell, $16.99 trade paper (208p) ISBN 978-0-800-73697-2

Cosmopolitan fashion editor and former pageant queen Saint-Elien (*Claim Your Crown*) lays out in this upbeat offering ways for women to find confidence through faith. Just as biblical queens Esther and Michal overcame fear to achieve great feats, Saint-Elien writes, readers can use God's boundless love to move past self-imposed limitations and adopt a "kingdom mindset" to "redefine who [they] are through the eyes of the Father" and reap his blessings. To help readers build stronger relationships with God, the author offers reflection questions ("What doubts do you need to bring to God today?") and suggests, among other things, writing to God. As well, she warns against heeding Satan's calls to "surrender to [your fears] in the battlefield of your mind." Throughout, she weaves in her own personal challenges with belief, and though the messaging becomes repetitive, readers will appreciate the author's passion and earnest entreaties to develop a personal relationship with God. Believers will welcome this heartening entry. *(Apr.)*

★ The Caliph and the Imam: The Making of Sunnism and Shiism

Toby Matthiesen. Oxford Univ., $34.95 (592p) ISBN 978-0-19068-946-9

Matthiesen (*The Other Saudis*), a Marie Curie Global Fellow at Stanford University, delivers a monumental review of Suniism and Shiism's complicated relationship. Tracing nearly 1,400 years, Matthiesen contends that "Islam's foundational conflict" began as a political disagreement and devolved into a sectarian split defined by social, spiritual, and intellectual differences. Matthiesen takes readers from Karbala, Iraq, to Mount Tomor, Albania, and beyond, illustrating that while standard narratives of the Sunni/Shia split suggest a perennial state of conflict, the relationship has shifted constantly due to social and political forces. Focusing particularly on post-1500 history, Matthiesen examines conflicts between the Safavid and Ottoman empires (in which "Ottoman scholars extended the notion of jihad to justify going to war against fellow Muslims"), the post-WWI contest for hegemony (after colonial interventions, religious divisions were "institutionalized"), the Iranian Revolution of 1979, and the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 to elucidate how Sunnis and Shiites are not "hermetically sealed" opposites, and took centuries to become distinct groups with cohesive identities. Matthiesen manages to balance thoughtful analysis of broad religious shifts with rigorous detail, making for a comprehensive yet readable resource. This is destined to become a standard text in the field. *(Mar.)*



Touch the Wounds: On Suffering, Trust, and Transformation

Tomáš Halík, trans. from the Czech by Gerald Turner. Univ. of Notre Dame, $25 (168p) ISBN 978-0-268-20489-1

Czech priest Halík (*From the Underground Church to Freedom*) offers profound reflections on faith and its roots in suffering. "All painful wounds... in the world are Christ's wounds," writes the author, and just as God "feels and suffers with us," believers must turn toward others' pain as part of their faith. To that end, Halík delves into Christian concepts of suffering and woundedness, musing on the value of worship ("Intercessory prayer is a conversation with God about the suffering of others"), God's unconditional love ("God accepts us the way we are, including our traumas [and] scars"), and wounds one has inflicted on others (they can't be undone, but believers should trust in God's forgiveness in order to forgive themselves). Throughout, he emphasizes that by recognizing "the [wounded] humanity that the Son of God took upon himself," faith can be felt. Halík's erudition is dizzying, and he draws on references ranging from early Christian heresies to Jewish mysticism with a theological depth that makes for slow, rewarding reading. This isn't for beginners, but those seeking deeper Christian insight will find much to gain. *(Mar.)*

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FICTION

Isha, Unscripted *Sajni Patel.* Berkley, ISBN 978-0-593-54783-0, Feb.

NONFICTION

The Patriarchs: The Origins of Inequality *Angela Saini.* Beacon, ISBN 978-0-8070-1454-7, Feb.

Spare *Prince Harry.* Random House, ISBN 978-0-593-59380-6, Jan.

A Faith That Will Not Fail: 10 Practices to Build Up Your Faith When Your World Is Falling Apart

Michele Cushatt. Zondervan, $19.99 trade paper (272p) ISBN 978-0-310-35303-4

Business coach Cushatt (*Relentless*) encourages readers in this earnest yet flawed entry to build a solid faith foundation to weather life's storms. The author, who has endured divorce, single motherhood, and cancer, starts out with a question she's frequently been posed—"How do you still believe, after so many reasons not to?"—before outlining 10 broadly defined practices that kept her grounded during moments of struggle. One is humility, which via shared vulnerability and activities such as confession can improve one's relationship with Jesus ("God is compassionate toward our human predicament") and others. Meanwhile, worship gives believers the "time to consider the magnitude and mystery of God," and while doing so, they should contemplate God's "nearness," just as God stayed close to protect the Israelites as they left Egypt. Throughout, "five-minute faith-builders" help readers apply Cushatt's lessons ("What is one action you can take to assume a posture of humility today?"). Though the author's approach sometimes feels overly granular and offers relatively routine lessons (the value of forgiveness, trust in God, etc.), her earnest advice will provide encouragement to those looking to deepen their faith. This has its moments, but readers will need to sift through the filler to find them. *(Mar.)*

Children's/YA

Picture Books

The Knowing

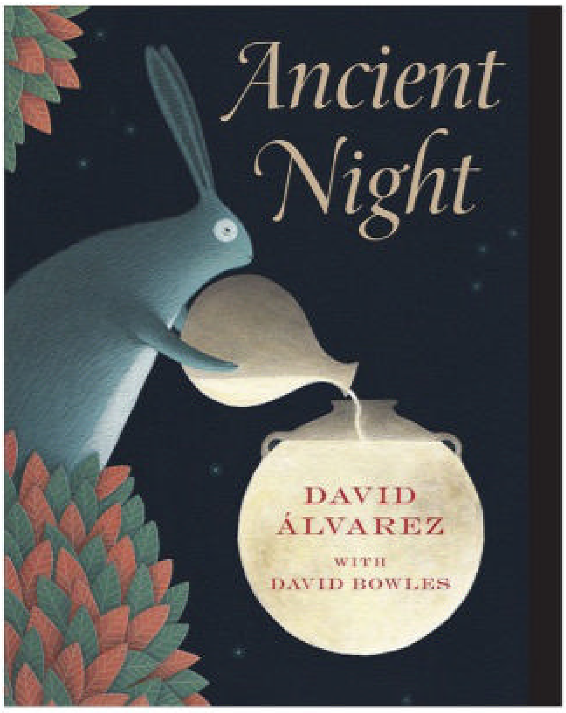
Ani DiFranco, illus. by Julia Mathew. Rise x Penguin Workshop, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-5933-8375-9

DiFranco's debut picture book offers up a rhyming reverie on selfhood and collective consciousness framed as "The Knowing." Loosely wrought watercolor, colored pencil, and charcoal pictures by Mathew, also making her debut, show a young narrator, who reads as of South Asian heritage, enjoying the simple pleasures of daily life: a hair-braiding session with a loving adult, time with a book under a favorite weathered blanket, and playtime with friends. But when the narrator catches a glimpse of themself in a mirror or in water, their reflection is shown surrounded by rays of light, suggesting that something bigger and more wonderful lies beneath the surface. Beyond that which can be seen or easily experienced (e.g., the "color/ to my hair/ my skin/ my eyes") is something that exists "underneath all that I know," and as the child engages in everyday activities—gazing into the sky, plucking a ripe mango—they contemplate that concept as being at one with a unifying force. Some readers may find more enigma than inspiration in this heady, feelings-oriented text, but its conceit is presented with an genuine openheartedness that should both intrigue and reassure. Ages 3–5. *Author's agent: Sarah Lazin, Aevitas Creative Management. Illustrator's agent: Andrea Morrison, Writers House. (Mar.)*

★ Ancient Night

David Álvarez with David Bowles. Levine Querido, $18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-64614-251-4

In this twined variation of several Mesoamerican stories, the earth's firmament is lit every evening thanks to Rabbit, who climbs down the Great Ceiba's trunk and treks across the "sea-ringed world" to gather aguamiel, the "precious, glowing nectar... of the first and holy maguey." Rabbit then pours the gleaming liquid into the moon, portrayed as a double-handled gourd. But when crafty Opossum cracks the moon and steals the aguamiel for himself, the orb loses its radiance, and the now-regretful animal must find a way to illuminate the world. Having been caught out by Rabbit, Opossum makes a trek of his own: "searching for that fire/ prepared by mighty gods/ as a gift for future humans/ who might shiver in the dark." Bowles's unhurried lines offer a playfully elegant feel to the telling, while Álvarez's saturated digitized paintings use a limited palette to imagine long-eared, gray Rabbit and pointy-nosed, rust-hued Opossum against luminous leafy landscapes. Together, the collaborators create a dreamlike story variation that truly shines. An authors' note details the story's roots. English and Spanish versions publish simultaneously. Ages 4–8. *Agent: (for Álvarez) Janet Soto Centeno and Susana Figueroa, Fondo de Cultura Económica. (Mar.)*



Álvarez and Bowles layer several Mesoamerican stories to create a fresh and visually dazzling picture book (reviewed on this page).

This Is a Story

John Schu, illus. by Lauren Castillo. Candlewick, $17.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-5362-0452-0

Starting in close and pulling back, this love letter to libraries foregrounds their gift for connecting each reader with just the right story. Schu (*This Is a School*) starts with books' basic element—"This is a word"—then widens out from word to page, page to book, book to shelf, and to the world, "full of humans," who sometimes need help "connecting." In thick-lined ink, watercolor, and pastel art from Castillo (*The Ramble Shamble Children*), the first book shown—Chris Butterworth's *Sea Horse*—is just right for a pale-skinned child who totes an unwieldy seahorse kite into the library after visiting a New York City park. A light-skinned librarian knowingly proffers the title, and the child is soon belly down with it on the round rug. Subsequent pages introduce variously diverse "readers/ with minds full of questions," whose visits lead to finding a book that aligns with their interests. Realistically drawn, recognizable book jackets cover the pages, creating jumping-off points and sparks of recognition in a title that's both the next best thing to an actual library visit and fine preparation for a first foray. Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Molly O'Neill, Root Literary. Illustrator's agent: Paul Rodeen, Rodeen Literary Management. (Mar.)*

★ To the Other Side

Erika Meza. HarperCollins/Tegen, $18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-0630-7316-6

This powerful solo work by Meza (*Mariana and Her Familia*) follows two unaccompanied, Latinx-cued children heading for the U.S.-Mexico border. As they start out, an older sister explains to the child narrator that "the rules of the game are simple": if they avoid monsters, evade capture, and keep moving, she says, they'll win "when we cross the line." Wearing colorfully rendered masks to "hide us. Make us fast. Make us brave," the siblings leave their home, portrayed in the ink-gray of the book's landscapes, to set out along a blossoming path bright with blooms. Soon, however, skeletal shadow-creatures threaten, as the children cross rivers and ride atop train boxcars. Dispirited ("this game was too long. Too tiring. Too hard"), the narrator at last realizes the reality of the situation, and perseveres as the duo approach, and cross, the border into a new set of experiences. Accompanying simple language that foregrounds a child's observations amid heightened danger are gouache, marker, and digital illustrations that layer pink, purple, and orange flowers and masks against ink-black bleeds and a repeating barred motif that represents myriad threats. It's a realistic but hopeful look at two children's emigration. An author's note concludes. Ages 4–8. *Agent: Claire Cartey, Holroyde Cartey. (Mar.)*

Homeland: My Father Dreams of Palestine

Hannah Moushabeck, illus. by Reem Madooh. Chronicle, $18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-7972-0205-1

Moushabeck makes her picture book debut with a quietly moving intergenerational reminiscence of a family's homeland, a place the narrator has "never been." The story opens on three sisters of Palestinian descent who treasure their father's bedtime stories of visiting his grandparents in the Old City of Jerusalem. His sensate accounts—accompanied by crisp, distilled digital illustrations from Madooh, also making her debut—bring to life the city's sights and sounds. He tells of beloved relatives (his sido, "a stern-looking, tarboosh-wearing, argileh-puffing, mustachioed man"), a drumming juice vendor who "played beautiful, intricate rhythms, using brass cups and saucers," the buzz of the family's café, and the homing pigeons Sido cares for, who instinctively understand "this is their home." The final scene returns to the present, showing the girls' family in a relaxed, happy mealtime preparation. But just outside the kitchen sits a key to the family's ancestral East Jerusalem home; it's an ever-present reminder both that "the ending of this story is not a happy one" and of their "hope of return." Though the vividly rendered lines don't contextualize the history behind the telling, the title's emotionally layered conclusion offers a strong jumping-off point for further discussion. Back matter includes a glossary of Arabic words and an author's note. Ages 5–8. *Author's agent: Jennifer Laughran, Andrea Brown Literary. (Mar.)*

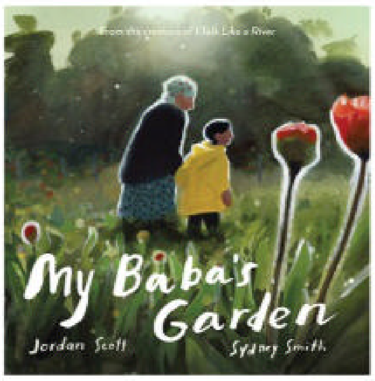
★ The Tree and the River

Aaron Becker. Candlewick, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-5362-2329-3

In this spectacular wordless tale that takes a long view of time's passing, Becker (*Journey*) spotlights a single tree's life cycle against a changing backdrop of human conflicts, technological change, and natural events. On the bank of a winding river where the light is clear and brilliant, a young tree grows, and diminutive figures raise a structure nearby. A pastoral existence soon gives way to a fortified building on the riverbank, and humans clothed in red and blue seem to prepare for war. A page turn reveals the results: the castle is destroyed, the tree remains, and a city grows up amid the ruins. Technology arrives, with railways and steampunk-style airships; then an industrial landscape, in which gloom pervades the atmosphere; and a futuristic, artificially illuminated night. The tree, its great limbs spreading, is languishing. Another page turn suggests cataclysm as the river runs high and the tree is almost submerged. But an acorn drops—and life persists, starting the cycle anew. In a sweeping, carefully detailed work that's visually reminiscent of *Anno's Journey*, Becker distills a lengthy timeline into bite-size rises and falls whose beats offer hope and solace for the long term. Ages 5–9. *(Mar.)*

★ My Baba's Garden

Jordan Scott, illus. by Sydney Smith. Holiday House/Porter, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-8234-5083-1



In this picture book by the creators of *I Talk Like a River*, first-person lines from a child speaker describe a grandmother who "lives in a chicken coop beside a highway," where the child is dropped off every morning before school. Scott's gentle narration reveals that "my Baba didn't have very much food for/ a long, long time." Now, the woman grows and saves it in the small residence, "jars of pickles in the bathroom, garlic hanging in the shower, beets on the shoe rack." The two don't have many words in common, but Baba serves the protagonist oatmeal each morning—and after a spill, picks it up, "kisses the oatmeal, puts it back into my bowl, and gently squeezes my cheeks." During rainy-day walks, Baba displays another form of self-reliance, kneeling to collect worms for her garden, and helping to nourish the soil that will in turn provide sustenance. When Baba grows older and moves to the young grandchild's house, it's a reversal that sees the narrator bringing her oatmeal, planting seeds in her room... and heading out into the rain for worms. Smith captures the duo's close bond in intimate, inky portraits that linger on their tan hands and faces as well as on images of precious food carefully grown and stored. Together, Scott and Smith create a portrait of a love which needs few words. An author's preface offers a remembrance of Scott's Polish Baba. Ages 4–8. *(Mar.)*

Fiction

★ Aniana del Mar Jumps In

Jasminne Mendez. Dial, $18.99 (384p) ISBN 978-0-593-53181-5

In Galveston, Tex., 12-year-old Aniana del Mar loves to swim: "All I want/ is to/ slip/ slide/ drift/ glide." During daddy-daughter dates, she and Papi head to the YMCA for swim practice and meets, but the two keep these events secret from Mami, who still grieves losing "her brother/ her house and/ her village" as a child during Hurricane Georges, and regularly fears the worst for her family. But everything comes crashing down when Ani's occasional post-exercise aches and swelling intensify into chronic pain, "statue-stiff/ mornings and clumsy/ collapses," and a diagnosis of juvenile idiopathic arthritis. Religious Mami believes that God is punishing Ani for keeping secrets and lies with her father, and, in spite of the physical therapist's recommendation otherwise, bans all swimming. Ani meanwhile feels abandoned by Papi, who's frequently away working for the Coast Guard. Via myriad poetic forms and sensorial verse, Mendez viscerally details the emotional family tumult of grief, mistrust, and resentment alongside Ani's heartfelt quest to reunite with water. Back matter details poetic forms used and notes that Mendez, like Aniana, is Dominican American and lives with chronic illness and disability. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Stefanie Sanchez Von Borstel, Full Circle Literary. (Mar.)*

A Bit of Earth

Karuna Riazi. Greenwillow, $19.99 (368p) ISBN 978-0-06-309866-4

A foreboding feeling permeates this mystery-driven novel, a *The Secret Garden* retelling from Riazi (*The Gauntlet*). Having grown up staying with relations in Bangladesh and Pakistan, young Maria Latif, though often considered "unpleasant," has experience abiding without her immediate family. But she's thrust into another new situation after her parents die while traveling, and their alumni friends in New York City seek to provide her with opportunities. When the distant cousin with whom she's supposed to stay is unexpectedly called away, she's forced to head to the "cold, unhappy" Long Island estate of the Claybornes, who read as white. There, she's hosted by "the second Mrs. Clayborne" as well as Mr. Clayborne's mother, who forbids Maria from visiting parts of the home, including the yard. Flouting the rules while navigating the residence's tense atmosphere, Maria feels happier upon finding an unlocked, unloved garden to tend—and inside it a beautifully embroidered sari. The outdoors has always been Maria's favorite place, and working in the secret garden feels just right to her. When he's sent home from boarding school for misbehavior, she also befriends young Colin Clayborne, the biracial-cued son of the late first Mrs. Clayborne, Saira. Chapters alternate experiential free-verse poetry with a third-person narrative as Maria excavates the garden's past and her own isolation in this thoughtful, emotionally honest take on the source material. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Thao Le, Sandra Dijkstra Agency. (Mar.)*

Curses Are the Worst (Scared Silly #1)

Elizabeth Eulberg. Scholastic Press, $7.99 paper (208p) ISBN 978-1-338-81535-1

Opening with a content warning send-up ("*broccoli*, lightning, annoying *siblings*") and quickly traveling back in time, Eulberg (*The Best Worst Summer*) starts this lively series kickoff with a brief look at the Salem witch trials. Parenthetical-studded prose details the flight of witch Ann Wilder from Salem to small-town Cauldron's Cove, where Wilder is blamed for an errant bolt of lightning and burned at the stake—and where a mathematical error causes her dying curse to remain dormant for 331 years. "Fast-forward to the time of the internet, long hot showers, and flushing toilets," where, in contemporary Cauldron's Cove, 10-year-old Regan Charles, who's dyslexic and has an auditory-processing condition, finds herself in detention despite having done nothing wrong. As beloved science teacher Ms. Stein begins to enact Ann Wilder's late-breaking revenge, Regan and her fellow detention denizens—sporty, blond Bennett Norland; his megasmart future stepsister, Sofia Vargas; and mayor's son Darius Washington, a superhero fan—are thrown into a high-stakes adventure around the witch's curse. Nonstop wordplay and an anonymous, fourth-wall-breaking narrator make for a spirited adventure. Most characters read as white; Sofia and Darius are described as having brown skin. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Suzie Townsend, New Leaf Literary. (Mar.)*

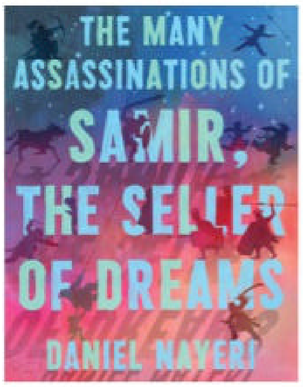
Leeva at Last

Sara Pennypacker, illus. by Matthew Cordell. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray, $19.99 (320p) ISBN 978-0-06-311442-5

Thoughtful Leeva Thornblossom, who's "somewhere between eight and nine," lives a life of servitude to her dreadful parents. Leeva desires to attend school, but her fame-absorbed mother, the town's mayor, and her money-obsessed father, its treasurer, forbid her from going, an act that proves the last straw. Though Leeva, raised on soap operas and periodical *Nutsmore Weekly*, is seldom allowed to leave her home, she sets out each day, seeking to answer the question "What are people *for*?" She first visits the Nutsmore library next door, where a kindly librarian and her nephew introduce the girl to the astonishing worlds of literature, friendship, and freshly baked cookies. When an opportunity to meet more new people arises, Leeva jumps at it, soon encountering hazmat-suit-wearing, risk-averse Osmund and good-natured, familially obligated Fern. Learning that her greedy parents are responsible for many of Nutsmore's financial struggles, Leeva resolves to keep her identity a secret while attempting to set things right. Strongly recalling elements of Roald Dahl's *Matilda*, this archly narrated satire from Pennypacker (*Here in the Real World*) slyly integrates potent themes such as fairness, responsibility, and trust. Characters default to white. Final art not seen by *PW*. Ages 8–12. *Author's agent: Steven Malk, Writers House. Illustrator's agent: Rosemary Stimola, Stimola Literary. (Mar.)*

★ The Many Assassinations of Samir, the Seller of Dreams

Daniel Nayeri, illus. by Daniel Miyares. Levine Querido, $21.99 (224p) ISBN 978-1-64614-303-0



Orphaned novice monk Omar is saved from stoning at the hands of his order at the start of this cleverly constructed adventure centering two Sogdian protagonists. For the dubious equivalent of six bolts of silk, the monks trade the approximately 12-year-old child to Samir, a savvy traveling merchant known as The Seller of Dreams. As their caravan family travels the Silk Road, moving from caravanserais to cities to oases across the Taklamakan Desert en route to Samarkand, Omar, now called Monkey, observes how Samir's dealings have earned more enemies than riches. Fearing for his own fate as a series of hired assassins tracks Samir, and beginning to intuit the man's underlying kindness, Monkey attempts to thwart the killers, each time moving closer to gaining his freedom. Regular acknowledgements of Monkey's involvement in Samir's eventual death accompany an ongoing chain of trades and catastrophes, creating page-turning narrative tension. Nayeri blends playful humor, solid pacing, and fully realized characters into a witty, assassin-studded traveler's yarn that also serves as a memorable, lively portrait of the 11th-century Silk Road. Richly hued art by Miyares and expansive back matter enhance the delight. Ages 8–12. *Author's agent: Joanne Volpe, New Leaf Literary. Illustrator's agent: Judy Sue*

Goodwin Sturges and April Jones Prince, Studio Goodwin Sturges. (Mar.)

The Scroll of Chaos

Elsie Chapman. Scholastic Press, $18.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-338-80323-5

A Chinese American tween traverses an alternate realm to stop a grim prophecy in this mythology-driven adventure from Chapman (*All the Ways Home*). In Vancouver, asthmatic 12-year-old Astrid Xu plays the clarinet to help her control her breathing, and she hopes her upcoming solo will encourage her depressed mother, who's taken to bed, to "get better enough to come watch." When she finds an old volume of Chinese mythology, she thinks she might be able to bond with her mother over the tales. But upon encountering a scroll inside and breaking its wax seal, Astrid and younger sister Marilla are transported into Zhen, or mythological China, home to fabled figures they've only read about. There, they learn that Astrid has unwittingly released the demon Chaos, who plans to bring about a realm-ending flood. Agreeing to help defeat Chaos in exchange for obtaining an immortal peach to help their mom, Astrid, along with Marilla and two legendary allies, set off to save Zhen from a dark fate. Interstitials from *A Handbook of Ancient Chinese Myth* aid in the plot progression of this imaginative middle grade novel about changing familial bonds and finding one's strength. An author's note includes mental health resources. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Victoria Marini, Irene Goodman Literary. (Mar.)*

The Sister Split

Auriane Desombre. Delacorte, $17.99 (256p) ISBN 978-0-5935-6868-2

Soon-to-be stepsisters employ *Parent Trap*-style hijinks in an effort to break up their newly engaged parents in this middle grade debut from Desombre (*I Think I Love You*). Twelve-year-old Autumn has an epic summer mapped out, involving New York City outings with best friend Saskia and avoiding game nights with her mother's boyfriend Harrison ("Harristinks," per Autumn) as well as his "boring" 12-year-old daughter Linnea. Those plans implode, however, when her mother announces her engagement to Harrison and the family's upcoming move to his home in Connecticut. Desperate to regain her old life, Autumn hatches a plan to break up her mother and Harrison, roping her soon-to-be stepsister into the scheme, which involves sabotaging moving day and wedding planning. But the longer she shares a room with Linnea, the more her resolve falters, and Autumn's emotions are further complicated by her own confusing feelings for Saskia and her mother's inability to see Autumn's deep, internal struggle with their rapidly changing life. The realistically middle grade voice pairs with a raw, real portrayal of a tween navigating a newly blended family and a burgeoning queer identity. Characters default to white. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Penny Moore, Aevitas Creative Management. (Mar.)*

Turtles of the Midnight Moon

María José Fitzgerald. Knopf, $17.99 (320p) ISBN 978-0-593-48870-6

Fitzgerald's page-turning debut, a contemporary eco-mystery with a touch of magical realism, explores timely themes of friendship and identity while tracing two girls' heartwarming bond. Though Mamá wishes that Barana would focus more on domestic cares, the 12-year-old volunteers to help the leatherback sea turtles nesting near the family's coastal Honduran home, Pataya—including the turtle to which Barana is connected via a tingling, crescent-shaped scar. In northern New Jersey, aspiring photographer Aberdeen "Abby" Durón is closing out a sixth grade year that turned miserable after her only friend moved away. When Abby's always-busy doctor Papi offers to take her with him on a summer assignment to his native Honduras, she jumps at the chance. The girls initially clash when Abby and her dad stay in Barana's family's casita, but they grow closer in facing a poaching plot that puts the entire nesting season at risk. As the two assemble clues and pin down suspects, Honduras is rendered in stunning natural detail that reminds readers just what the friends are fighting to protect. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Sara Crowe, Pippin Properties. (Mar.)*

The Alchemy of Letting Go

Amber Morrell. Albert Whitman, $17.99 (288p) ISBN 978-0-8075-4937-7

Seventh grader Juniper Edwards and her big sister Ingrid used to love studying insects together, but two years after Ingrid's death by drowning, Juniper has become obsessed with entomology. Moreover, she is determined to capture the butterfly that Ingrid most wanted for their collection—the rare Palos Verdes Blue, which lives in the coastal watershed near their Southern California home. After Juniper almost drowns during her pursuit, her rigorous scientific understanding of the world is shaken as she manifests powers that can bring dead flora and insects back to life. The discovery of magician neighbors—and the idea that she can approach her newfound affinity scientifically—lead to her taking on the practice with zeal, a singular goal in mind: reviving Ingrid. Juniper's magic often feels convenient—she becomes magically adept with frustrating ease—but the ramifications of her choices deliver profound emotional moments throughout. Twining matters magical and scientific in straightforward prose, Morrell's contemplative debut handles the complexity of grief with a deft touch while addressing serious ethical questions around life, death, and the responsibilities of power. Juniper and her family cue as white. Ages 9–12. *Agent: Travis Pennington, Knight Agency. (Mar.)*

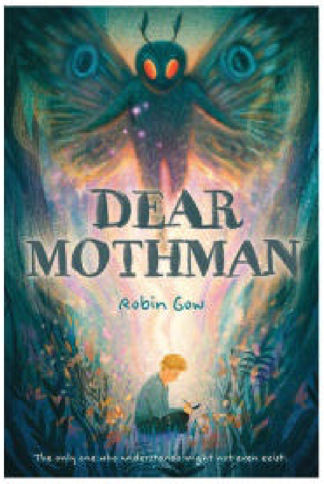
★ Catch Me If I Fall

Barry Jonsberg. Groundwood, $17.99 paper (280p) ISBN 978-1-77306-891-6

A dystopian future Australia provides the backdrop for this smart speculative read revolving around the profound love of a twin brother and sister. Twelve-year-old siblings Aiden and Ashleigh Delatour live privileged existences in Sydney, where they attend an elite private school and have the best of everything courtesy of their tech-mogul mother, an AI engineer. "Siblings are there to catch you when you fall," they are taught, representing a vital bond in a climate change–ravaged world in which many people suffer and die beyond enclave walls. Quiet Aiden, who's "a bit of a loner," has a genetic condition that impedes digestion; first-person narrator Ashleigh, quick to brag about their expensive home, struggles to make friends. After he sustains a grave injury while kayaking, Aiden begins to change in radical ways, becoming argumentative around an increasing awareness of the larger world's grim realities. Though Ashleigh questions their relationship, Aiden's awareness of the duo's privilege eventually causes Ashleigh to open her eyes, culminating in a deftly handled conclusion that compassionately examines the intersection of ethics and familial love. Jonsberg (*A Song Only I Can Hear*) creates a timely, disturbingly plausible future of haves and have-nots that examines mature concerns through a savvy middle grade viewpoint. Ashleigh and Aiden have black hair and pale skin. Ages 9–12. *(Mar.)*

Dear Mothman

Robin Gow. Amulet, $18.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-4197-6440-0



An autistic, transgender sixth grader attempts to correspond with a cryptid following his best friend's death in this poignant novel from Gow (*A Million Quiet Revolutions*). Lewis Hugh was the only person whom Noah Romano was out to; since Lewis died in a car accident three months ago, Noah has been feeling lonely and unmoored. Noah doesn't believe in Mothman, as Lewis did, but he decides to use Lewis's idea of finding the figure for a science fair project. As he hunts for proof, writing letters to Mothman that he leaves under a tree, he also receives thoughtful support from adults in his life and befriends a trio of LARPers. Alternating between first-person narration and letters to Mothman, and peppered with creepy-cute sketch-style illustrations, this touching free verse story abounds with hard-hitting and tender lines about grief, queerness, and neurodivergence—concepts that Noah ponders alongside the idea of monstrosity ("'monster' is what people become/ when other people are afraid of them/ for being different"). Steeped in the atmosphere of a Pennsylvania coal mining town, Noah's journey to himself is at once melancholy and empowering. Noah is of Irish and Italian heritage; secondary characters represent racial diversity. Ages 10–14. *Agent: Jordan Hamessley, New Leaf Literary. (Mar.)*

Amelia Gray Is Almost Okay

Jessica Brody. Delacorte, $17.99 (432p) ISBN 978-0-593-17372-5

As 12-year-old Amelia Gray, who reads as white, finishes up sixth grade at her 39th school, she's ready for yet another four-week stay in a new place with her single father, who travels the country revamping hotels. Happy with their unattached "life on the go" and their "supermutt" Biscotti, she is stunned when her father announces that they'll stay in their next destination—Summerville, N.Y.—for an entire summer. He also challenges her to join an activity for the duration, and promises that if she sticks with it, he'll secure the thing she wants most: a dog DNA test for Biscotti. Flummoxed by the realization that she lacks a "Thing" of her own, Amelia reinvents herself as three separate people, each with a different name, to find out which persona suits her best. As Amie the "track superstar," Mellie the journalist, and Lia the performer, she makes friends—and enemies—and digs herself into a deepening pit of small-town drama as she tries to keep her identities separate and her father seems to put down roots. Aptly literalizing the perennial theme of reinventing oneself, this light comedy of errors from Brody (*I Speak Boy*) features laugh-aloud shenanigans and tender insights. Ages 10–up. *Agent: Jim McCarthy, Dystel, Goderich & Bourret. (Mar.)*

A Green Velvet Secret

Vicki Grant. Tundra, $17.99 (256p) ISBN 978-0-73527-012-1

A beloved grandmother's death drives this moving mystery from Grant (*Tell Me When You Feel Something*). Twelve-year-old Yardley O'Hanlon is close to her free-spirited grandmother, Gidge, who shares her love of crafting and guerrilla fashion. But Gidge's balloons-and-champagne announcement of her terminal cancer diagnosis—"an exciting new phase of my life"—promises to change that. Using her remaining time to get her karma, and her belongings, in order, Gidge begins writing letters of apology, sorting her vast vintage clothing collection, and trying to persuade Yardley that she could use a friend her own age. When she discovers that a favorite former student owns the Over Easy Vintage Emporium, Gidge urges Yardley to befriend his sullen nephew, Harris. Devastated following Gidge's tenderly portrayed physician-assisted death, Yardley takes up work at Over Easy and embraces Gidge's belief in reincarnation—soon spotting Gidge in a customer who comes in to claim the late woman's green velvet dress. As Yardley seeks the stranger with Gidge's eyes, she discovers that her grandmother—and karma—have surprises in store. Quirky, fully fleshed characters and a tender third-person narration accompany themes of grieving, making amends, and living a full life in this winning novel. Characters read as white. Ages 10–up. *Agent: Fiona Kenshole, Transatlantic Literary. (Mar.)*

Girl Forgotten

April Henry. Little, Brown/Ottaviano, $18.99 (272p) ISBN 978-0-316-32259-1

Henry (*Two Truths and a Lie*) questions the ethics of true crime as entertainment in this tightly twisted thriller. Seventeen-year-old transfer student Piper Gray, a murder podcast enthusiast, attains notoriety at North High when she starts her own podcast about the unsolved murder of teenage Layla Trello, who was found dead in the nearby woods 17 years ago. Determined to crack the cold case, Piper enlists classmate Jonas Shortridge to help investigate. As the inquiry gains traction and suspects reemerge, Piper receives an anonymous demand—"Stop this podcast about Layla Trello. You don't want to end up like her"—prompting Piper and Jonas to believe the murderer is listening. Henry's socially aware prose, interspersed with podcast transcripts and newspaper clippings, deftly depicts Piper's altruistic commitment to justice for Layla alongside her critique of the perfect-victim myth ("Her disappearance and death attracted the kind of attention you probably wouldn't get if you were poor, disabled, older, homeless, or not white"). Sections read, at times, like a "how-to" guide for podcasting, but red herrings, dramatic cliff-hangers, and a growing body count keep the plot suspenseful. Major characters cue as white. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Wendy Schmalz, Wendy Schmalz Agency. (Mar.)*

Lucha of the Night Forest

Tehlor Kay Mejia. Make Me a World, $18.99 (368p) ISBN 978-0-59-33783-66

Lyrical prose and fiercely characterized protagonists make up the heart of this propulsive fantasy adventure by Mejia (*Miss Meteor*). To support her drug-dependent mother and restless younger sister Lis in the corrupt city of Rabado, 16-year-old Lucha Moya uses her invisibility to hunt dangerous beasts in the nearby Bosque de la Noche. After her mother suddenly disappears on what Lucha assumes is another episode prompted by Olvida—an addictive drug that "steal[s] your cares, your worries, your memories"—empty cupboards force Lucha to pursue ever more dangerous bounties in the forest. The Ricos, who both run the city and supply Olvida, soon threaten to evict the sisters, and Lis volunteers herself for indentured servitude in the Olvida greenhouses. Lucha is forced to turn to El Sediento, a legend of the forest, who promises to give her the power to save her sister and destroy Olvida—for a deceptively simple price. Slight worldbuilding and uneven pacing are balanced out by high stakes, a lushly described Latin America–inspired setting teeming with dark atmospherics, and an unforgettable queer romance. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Jim McCarthy, Dystel, Goderich & Bourret. (Mar.)*

"A beautiful fantasy for the ages." —MARIE LU
LUCHA
OF THE
NIGHT
FOREST
TEHLOR KAY MEJIA

Royal Blood (Royal Blood #1)

Aimée Carter. Delacorte, $18.99 (368p) ISBN 978-0-593-48589-7

Carter (*Captive*) presents an intriguing murder mystery starring an American teenager shaking up the foundations of an alternate British royal family. King Alexander has two 17-year-old daughters: beautiful, respectable acknowledged heir Maisie, and illegitimate half-American Evangeline "Evan" Bright, the latter a well-kept secret from the public. Evan has never met her royal relatives; upon gaining custody of her six years prior, King Alexander has shuffled her through various boarding schools and summer camps in order to keep her under the radar. Following an incident, she's expelled from school just before graduation, and the king's secretary packs her off to London to avoid potential arrest. All Evan wants is to escape Maisie's and the queen's patronizing attitudes, and to be with her mother, whom she hasn't seen in years, but she's now stuck at Windsor Castle until she turns 18. Further complications arise when the press find out she's the king's daughter and after a tabloid owner's son who slipped Evan drugs during a night out turns up dead—and she's accused of his murder. Evan's portrayal as a snarky fish-out-of-water among glamorous European royalty lends a comedic through line to Carter's jam-packed novel, the first in a trilogy. Major characters read as white. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Rosemary Stimola, Stimola Literary. (Mar.)*

There Goes the Neighborhood

Jade Adia. Disney-Hyperion, $18.99 (432p) ISBN 978-1-368-08432-1

Fifteen-year-old best friends Rhea and Malachi, who are Black, and Zeke, who is Salvadorian, have spent their entire lives in their racially diverse Los Angeles neighborhood. But when gentrification prompts Zeke's callous landlord to dramatically increase his building's rent, the three teens attempt to come up with a solution that will help him, as well as the rest of their community. Meanwhile, Rhea struggles to overcome feelings of jealousy and frustration when magnetic newcomers Lou and Marley, described as having brown skin, infiltrate her friend group. Unbeknownst to their new peers, Rhea, Malachi, and Zeke decide to use gentrifiers' prejudice to their own advantage by creating a fake gang called SOSI, hoping its sudden appearance will garner enough negative attention to persuade developers to stop "colonizing the neighborhood." But after SOSI begins cultivating real fear among local denizens, it sparks deadly consequences. In this riveting portrait of community care, debut author Adia paints the pain, danger, and consequences of gentrification with visceral clarity, highlighting changes such as displacement and fractured families via Rhea's biting and witty voice and her unwavering loyalty to her hometown. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Jim McCarthy, Dystel, Goderich & Bourret. (Mar.)*

Girl Out of Time

Clyde Boyer. Girl Friday, $12.95 paper (368p) ISBN 978-1-954854-22-2

Science-minded eighth grader Anna Armstrong has always longed to explore space. She believes her dreams are forfeit when her parents' deaths force her to leave Boston to live with her uncle Jack on his farm in Smartt, Ind. But it turns out that Uncle Jack doesn't simply grow crops. He also employs an international team of researchers dedicated to combatting climate change and soil erosion, stoking Anna's curiosity. Eventually, Anna starts experiencing supernatural phenomena such as bizarre noises and lights coming from the sky, heralding the arrival of Mara Banjoko Lee, a time traveler from the future. Mara persuades Anna to become her partner in closing wormholes that have begun popping up across Smartt and tracking down the mysterious shadow creature that's lurking around town. Driven by a mutual love of technology, Anna and Mara bring out the best in each other, placing friendship at the center of their adventure and elevating their rapidly paced narrative with rich internality. Boyer forefronts imaginative inventions such as antigravity boots and cloaking devices, and astute meditations on fate and environmentalism, to devise a dynamic speculative romp that is both thoughtful and timely. Most characters are coded as white. Ages 13–17. *(Mar.)*

The Coldest Winter I Ever Spent

Ann Jacobus. Carolrhoda Lab, $19.99 (352p) ISBN 978-1-7284-2395-1

After she attempted to take her own life before this book's start, 18-year-old Del finally feels things are getting back on track. She's living in San Francisco with her beloved aunt Fran, volunteering at a suicide-prevention hotline, attending meetings for her alcohol dependency, and taking medication to manage her anxiety and depression. Del is excited for the arrival of her crush and family friend Nick, a premed college student with retinitis pigmentosa who's visiting

San Francisco for a summer internship at UC Berkeley. She had hoped to pursue a relationship with him, and she's gutted when he tells her he just wants to be friends. Her life is further upended when she learns that Aunt Fran has terminal cancer and plans to enter hospice at home. With intensely emotional and honest prose, Jacobus (*Romancing the Dark in the City of Light*) conveys Del's inner turmoil and longing for relief from the constant pain and fear of death she believes haunt her life. The narrative's overall tone can sometimes read as unrelentingly melancholy; supportive health coordinators and mentors help Del confront her fears and find a new appreciation for life in this hopeful read. Characters default to white. Ages 13–up. *Agent: Erzsi Deàk, Hen&ink Literary Studio. (Mar.)*

You Wouldn't Dare

Samantha Markum. Wednesday, $18.99 (368p) ISBN 978-1-250-84678-5

When Juniper Nash Abreheart's mother informs her that they'll be leaving White Coral Key, Fla., to move in with her boyfriend Paul and his mercurial daughter Tallulah on the South Shore, Junie struggles to accept that she's about to leave behind everything she's ever known. Though Junie and Tallulah's parents hope that the teens will bond while working at the Abreheart's café over the summer, the pair is hesitant to get to know each other. Junie's life is further complicated by increasingly tense dynamics among her friend group caused by a secret dalliance gone awry. Knowing her time in White Coral Key is almost up, Junie endeavors to repair her broken relationships and prepare for her future. Script excerpts from Shakespearean musical *Midsummer Madness*, the production that Junie is helping to stage at her community theater, begin each chapter. Markum (*This May End Badly*) crafts well-drawn, mostly white protagonists via zippy dialogue and employs an unconventional locale peopled by a tight-knit community of intersectionally diverse year-round denizens and lively tourists, to deliver a bustling, summery tale that navigates messy relationships and forgiveness. Ages 13–up. *Agent: Lauren Spieller, Triada US. (Mar.)*

Chaos & Flame (Chaos & Flame #1)

Tessa Gratton and Justina Ireland. Razorbill, $19.99 (336p) ISBN 978-0-593-35332-5

Gratton (*Moon Dark Smile*) and Ireland (*Rust in the Root*) team up to deliver a gripping fantasy about betrayal, forgiveness, loss, and loyalty amid a magical war. Seventeen-year-old Darling Seabreak cannot remember anything about her childhood before being adopted by the regent of House Kraken. She is raised as a mercenary in House Kraken's war against House Dragon until she is captured by House Dragon's War Prince, 18-year-old Talon Goldhoard. Unbeknownst to Darling, she has been the subject of a lifetime of murals painted by Talon's older brother, "Mad Dragon Prince Regent" Caspian Goldhoard. Through these murals, Darling learns that she is the last remaining Sphinx, a member of the house that Talon's father massacred at the beginning of the war. When Caspian announces his intentions to reinstate the Sphinxes to their former glory on a reparations tour, Darling and Talon cautiously follow, hoping this could be the first step toward a peaceful future. Through standard tropes, familiar worldbuilding, and Darling and Talon's alternating narratives, the authors gradually employ myriad political and social perspectives that capably flesh out the novel's compelling war-torn landscape. Characters are described as having varying skin tones. Ages 14–up. *(Mar.)*

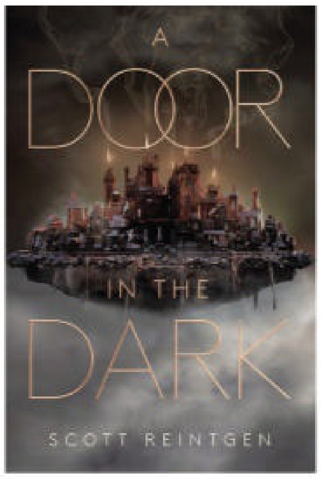
★ Different for Boys

Patrick Ness, illus. by Tea Bendix. Walker US, $18.99 (104p) ISBN 978-1-5362-2889-2

Ness (*Burn*) cheekily utilizes fourth wall–breaking meta-humor and redacted curse words, derogatory language, and descriptions of sexual acts to craft an affecting novella that explores sexuality and toxic masculinity. Fifteen-year-old Ant Stevenson and his best friend Charlie Shepton have been "goofing around" sexually. Though their mutual arrangement is meant to help them blow off steam, Ant is left wondering why he so desperately wants to kiss Charlie, despite it being against their agreed upon rules, which state that kissing "would make us gay." When a new classroom setup seats Ant and Charlie with drama kid Jack, who everyone assumes is queer, Ant wrestles with complex affections for Charlie and fledgling romantic feelings for Jack. Ant is an immediately likable protagonist, whose efforts to sort out his desires while maintaining relationships with classmates is admirable and empathetic. Ness delivers an authentic-feeling story that interrogates the idea that teens are "too young to read about the stuff we actually do." Black-and-white pencil illustrations by Bendix provide an expressive complement to concise, sensitive, and thought-provoking text in this un-put-downable, easily devoured read. Characters are assumed white. Ages 14–up. *(Mar.)*

★ A Door in the Dark (A Door in the Dark #1)

Scott Reintgen. McElderry, $19.99 (368p) ISBN 978-1-66591-868-8



Six teenage wizards are stranded in the wilderness after a spell goes awry in this pulse-pounding series launch from Reintgen (the Ashlords duology). Balmerick University scholarship student Ren Monroe may be talented, but she lacks the connections necessary to secure employment at one of the wealthy, powerful political houses in the hierarchical city of Kathor. That is, until disaster strikes. Ren and five classmates—including two house heirs—are traveling via portal when something misfires and drops them in the Dires, a distant, desolate place where dragons once dwelled and monsters still roam. One person mysteriously dies in transit, inspiring distrust among the survivors, but since Kathor is too far for transport via sorcery, the group must join forces to return on foot. Though the long, dangerous trek is further complicated by limited resources, Ren determines it a serendipitous opportunity to impress the heirs and obtain placement in one of their houses—provided that they all live. Reintgen combines inventive worldbuilding, intricate plotting, and a strongly developed, racially diverse cast to craft a twisty tale of classism, redemption, and revenge. Tense prose and escalating environmental, magical, and social conflicts foster constant fear for the characters' fates. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Kristin Nelson, Nelson Literary. (Mar.)*

The Immeasurable Depth of You

Maria Ingrande Mora. Peachtree Teen, $18.99 (352p) ISBN 978-1-68263-542-1

After Brynn shares an emotional post online, prompting her mother to fear that she's suicidal, her mom sends Brynn to stay with her father on his Florida houseboat for the summer, hoping that being offline will improve her mental state. While navigating anxiety and intrusive thoughts about death and disaster, Brynn begins exploring the bayou on her father's paddleboard. Out among the trees, she finds a mysterious girl named Skylar, who invites Brynn to meet her the next day at a hidden beach. Brynn excitedly tells her father about her new friend, but she's shocked after he reveals that the girl she saw purportedly took her own life five years ago. Brynn confronts the ghost of Skylar, who insists she was murdered, and vows to find the killer, persisting even as the investigation reopens old wounds for Brynn's father, the town, and Skylar's parents. Mora (*Fragile Remedy*) renders Brynn, Skylar, and their respective parents' emotions with the grace and sympathy necessary for the heavy topics addressed. Intense emotional situations and the lightly supernatural premise, coupled with Brynn's growing self-compassion regarding her own mental health, make for a simultaneously devastating and uplifting telling. Main characters read as white. Ages 14–up. *(Mar.)*

Last Sunrise in Eterna

Amparo Ortiz. Page Street Kids, $18.99 (336p) ISBN 978-1-64567-614-0

Three human teens are whisked away to Eterna, an elven island off the coast of Puerto Rico, to participate in a magical event in this enticing fantasy by Ortiz (*Dragonblood Ring*). To make ends meet following her father's murder by elves, 17-year-old Sevim Burgos begins scavenging and selling elf corpses to her father's childhood friend, corrupt Doctor Ramírez. When elf prince Aro Herrera catches Sevim in the act, Doctor Ramírez denies any involvement with Sevim and coldly fires her. Sevim's mother is then kidnapped by Aro, who promises to set her free if Sevim participates in the annual Exchange, a weeklong event that takes place on Eterna. During the occasion, three human teens give up their ability to dream in exchange for temporary use of magic to complete challenges. As the event unfolds, Sevim learns that Eterna is home to even more treacherous secrets than she realized, and saving her mother becomes the least of her worries. Ortiz imbues the narrative's worldbuilding and magic system with abundant cultural details, entrenching the high-stakes competition with a deep appreciation for Puerto Rican lore. Through a large cast containing characters of varying abilities, sexualities, and skin tones, the author explores myriad themes of grief and identity. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Linda Camacho, Gallt & Zacker Literary. (Mar.)*

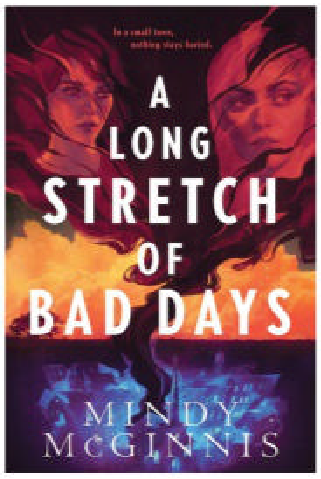
Lies We Sing to the Sea

Sarah Underwood. HarperTeen, $19.99 (432p) ISBN 978-0-06-323447-5

Underwood artfully ties Homeric tropes into the plot of this alluring, if unevenly paced, ancient Greek retelling. To avoid societal destruction, the citizens of a cursed Ithaca annually sacrifice 12 teenage girls to Poseidon. When 17-year-old orphan Leto is sentenced to death, unexplained happenings lead to her waking on the island of Pandou, where she meets Melantho, who had previously been sacrificed only to similarly awaken on the island, cursed to command the tides. To break the curse, Leto must kill teenage Prince Mathias of Ithaca, a descendant of Odysseus who is haunted by the annual tradition. As the three teens' lives intertwine, amorous feelings are forged amid harrowing action and vengeful pursuits. Leto, Mathias, and Melantho's sweeping alternating perspectives drive this urgent-feeling romantic adventure. Floral language, while occasionally dampening character development, excels at setting an absorbing scene. Exploring conflicts surrounding the mistreatment of women, power imbalances, and sexual violence, Underwood adroitly utilizes the inspiration material's foundation to deliver an expansive world plagued by monsters both mythical and mortal. All characters cue as white. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Catherine Cho, Paper Literary. (Mar.)*

A Long Stretch of Bad Days

Mindy McGinnis. HarperCollins/Tegen, $19.99 (368p) ISBN 978-0-0632-3036-1


In a small town, nothing stays buried.
A LONG STRETCH OF BAD DAYS
MINDY McGINNIS

This animated and good-humored tale by McGinnis (*The Last Laugh*) features an intrepid teenage odd couple working together to gain entry into a prestigious journalism program by solving a mystery. Due to a mistake made by her high school guidance counselor, 18-year-old valedictorian Lydia Chass has just learned that she doesn't have enough history credits to graduate. Her school principal suggests that if Lydia—who hosts a podcast called *On the Ground in Flyover Country*—records some episodes on the history of her Henley, Ohio, town, he'll grant her the necessary credits. Hoping to give the podcast some much-needed grit, Lydia recruits acerbic classmate Bristal Jamison, who's in a similar bind. They decide to focus on the 1994 unsolved murder of 65-year-old local trailer resident Randall Boggs, which leads them to a cold case involving a missing teenage girl. Together, the girls uncover decades-old secrets and reveal chilling truths about their small town and its close-knit community. Lydia and Bristal's wry banter, their polar opposite characterizations, and their evolving, convoluted friendship lend a refreshing and dark joviality to this cleverly realized feminist thriller. All main characters are white. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Adriann Ranta Zurhellen, Folio Literary. (Mar.)*

The Quiet and the Loud

Helena Fox. Dial, $19.99 (400p) ISBN 978-0-593-35458-2

Fox (*How It Feels to Float*) delivers an immersive, Sydney, Australia–set accounting of a teen struggling to overcome past traumas while dealing with her loved ones' varying conflicts. Whenever life begins to overwhelm 18-year-old George, she escapes to the peace and quiet of kayaking. But after she learns that her estranged father is dying of heart disease, she doesn't believe kayaking will help with her headspace, especially when she recalls a haunting memory: her father abandoning a then 10-year-old George on a kayak one night in the middle of a lake. He requests that she visit him in Seattle, saying he wants to make amends, but also asks that she not reveal his diagnosis to her mother. Meanwhile, George is unsure how to help her friend Tess, who is dealing with postpartum depression, and George's worries over Tess stall her budding romance with newcomer Calliope. Harrowing flashbacks told via George's vulnerable voice detail past experiences featuring her father's alcohol dependency, while visceral depictions of Australian wildfires add a palpable element of urgency that both mirrors and impacts George's desperation to take control of her life. George and Tess are assumed white; Calliope is of Sri Lankan descent. Ages 14–up. *(Mar.)*

Three Drops of Blood

Gretchen McNeil. Disney-Hyperion, $17.99 (336p) ISBN 978-1-3680-7215-1

McNeil pulls inspiration from Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* to craft an insidiously witty thriller that covers issues surrounding body shaming and sexual violence. Seventeen-year-old aspiring actor Kate Williams has secured the role of spunky best friend on TV show *Dirty Pretty Teens*, acting opposite former Disney Channel star Belle Masterson, 17. Kate's determined to use the show as a stepping-stone to her future goals, which include skipping college and "escaping the type casting juggernaut of the fat funny girl." But after Belle posts a video of her and Kate dancing with Dex Pratt, the married 38-year-old showrunner, the show is canceled, foiling Kate's plans. Kate takes a job at a law firm and, while doing late-night filing, she sees a woman shoot and kill two men in the office across the courtyard. When authorities don't believe her, Kate enlists coworker Ty Chen's help investigating the crime. Kate's desire to be seen as a competent adult and the main character of her own story proves appealing in this first-rate mystery, which leads to memorable twists, exhilarating chase sequences, and a satisfying romance. Most of the protagonists are white. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Ginger Clark, Ginger Clark Literary. (Mar.)*

Comics

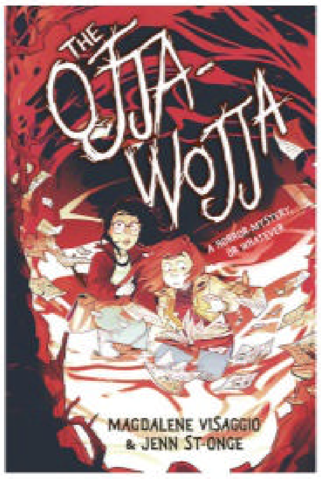
Countdown (Astroneer #1)

Dave Dwonch, Mia Goodwin, and Xenia Pamfil. Titan, $13.99 paper (112p) ISBN 978-1-78773-990-1

This jocular, episodic graphic novel space adventure, based on the video game *Astroneer*, endeavors to answer a central question: How many Astroneers does it take to save the world? While researching a desert-like planet in opening tale "Countdown," space explorer Astroneer Seven stumbles upon a sentient crystal that transports him to a strange, psychedelically colorful dimension called the Oatmeal. Upon returning home, he learns that he's been gone for two weeks and that a different Astroneer has taken up residence at his camp. Unexplainable and seemingly inconsequential events repeatedly send the protagonist back into the Oatmeal; a new explorer appears after each recurrence, and what was once a solitary research mission becomes a group operation. The Astroneers struggle to get along, but as the planet becomes increasingly unstable, each individual's skills prove essential in halting the world's imminent meltdown. Cartoonish characters and innovative technologies rendered in eye-catching hues deftly balance the planetary destruction premise. Interstellar action and a hearty dose of humor combine to deliver a madcap adventure fit for source material fans and newcomers alike. Three brief bonus stories with vastly differing tones—"Decaf Noir" has distinctly Ed Brubaker vibes—conclude. Ages 10–17. *(Mar.)*

The Ojja-Wojja (The Ojja-Wojja #1)

Magdalene Visaggio, illus. by Jenn St-Onge. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray, $22.99 (192p) ISBN 978-0-06-285239-7; $13.99 paper ISBN 978-0-06-285242-7



Two middle schoolers accidentally unleash an ancient evil upon their town in this otherworldly series-launching graphic novel exploit. Best friends Val, an occult fanatic who is autistic, and Lanie, who is transgender and obsessed with witchcraft, endure constant bullying from popular classmate Andrea, causing them to feel like misfits in their small town. When a supportive teacher learns of Val's interest in aliens and ghosts, he suggests that she complete an independent study on paranormal phenomena, hoping the assignment will boost her morale. Inviting Lanie along, Val researches local ghost stories, leading the girls to uncover a forgotten pact between a town founder and a terrifying spirit called the Ojja-Wojja, for which the town must renounce witches and those who "stand apart from this community" in return for prosperity. Upon mistakenly summoning the Ojja-Wojja, the specter possesses Andrea and begins terrorizing the neighborhood. Val uses abundant narrative styles—including MMORPG, magical girl anime, and space operas—to frame the world in ways she can understand. Visaggio (*Cold Bodies*, for adults) fittingly leans into these imaginative digressions, imbuing the tale with myriad genre flavors that St-Onge (the Jem and the Holograms series) supports via dynamically paneled, skillfully colored art teeming with ethereal ambiance and peopled by a large cast depicted with varying body types and skin tones. Ages 10–up. *(Mar.)*

Nonfiction

Boundless

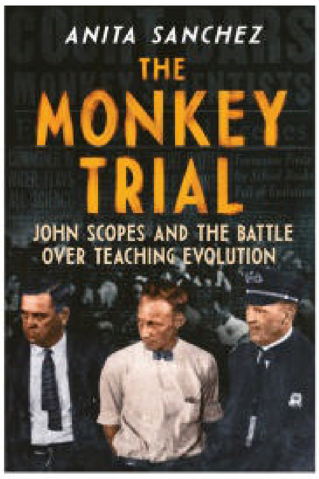
Chaunté Lowe. Scholastic Focus, $18.99 (240p) ISBN 978-1-338-74152-0

Athlete, medalist, and four-time Olympian Chaunté Lowe (b. 1984) vividly recounts her Paso Robles, Calif., childhood and arc toward the Olympics in a focused autobiography. She kicks off with an early memory of how watching Florence Griffith Joyner compete in the 1988 Seoul Olympics sparked her own early desire to become an Olympian and her subsequent focus on athletic pursuits. Forthright recollections offered in well-paced chapters detail Lowe's sibling dynamic as the youngest of three sisters, awareness of her family's financial precarity, and growing relationship with her supportive paternal grandmother, a vocalist who encourages her to embrace education and work toward a scholarship ("The life that you're living now is not the life you have to have when you grow up"). Alongside experiences of housing insecurity and witnessing her stepfather's violence, chapters distill Lowe's eventually joining a recreation track team, living with her maternal grandmother in Riverside, Calif., and her road to the 2004 U.S. Olympic high jump team. Themes of individual drive, family, and teamwork appear throughout this galvanizing memoir, whose emotionally direct telling is rooted in determination and hope. Ages 8–12. *(Mar.)*

★ The Monkey Trial: John Scopes and the Battle over Teaching Evolution

Anita Sanchez. Clarion, $19.99 (192p) ISBN 978-0-3584-5769-5

Sanchez (*Save the... Whale Sharks*) brings a sense of immediacy to a 1925 watershed event that still echoes in American politics and discourse. Education, religion, and nascent media came together in a narrative nonfiction telling of the trial of John Scopes, a Dayton, Tenn., educator who taught Darwin's theory of evolution, violating a state law that criminalized such actions. Scopes had been asked to "stand for a test case" by local businessmen hoping to profit from national attention around the engineered trial. The ordeal pitted the American Civil Liberties Union, which sought to defend educators prosecuted under the law, against fundamentalist Christians concerned about the impact of teaching evolution in lieu of creation. Through photographs and conversational prose, Sanchez shows how sleepy Dayton became a "circus," experiencing throngs of visitors, chimpanzees promoting local businesses, and crowds eager for the main event: a highly publicized courtroom face-off between defense lawyer Clarence Darrow and prosecuting lawyer William Jennings Bryan, both previously regarded as men of the people. "Media in the Spotlight" sections contextualize the role of newspapers, newsreels, and radio in spreading information. It's a lively, solidly researched tale that delivers enduring truths about the lure of controversy. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Regina Ryan, Regina Ryan Publishing. (Mar.)*



The Woman in the Moon: How Margaret Hamilton Helped Fly the First Astronauts to the Moon

Richard Maurer. Roaring Book, $19.99 (272p) ISBN 978-1-62672-856-1

"After the moon landings... practically no one knew about the computer and software engineers who had played such a crucial role" writes Maurer (*Destination Moon*) in this corrective work—a biography of mathematician Margaret Hamilton (b. 1936), who led the team that coded automated functions into the "guidance and control system that would tell the astronauts where they were." Three sections span Hamilton's Michigan upbringing, schooling, and marriage; her being hired by MIT to help code the "revolutionary machine that would conduct astronauts to the Moon and back"; and her later involvement with the Apollo program and beyond. Throughout, the book outlines her pivotal role in naming and legitimizing the field of software engineering while opening the door for women in STEM fields. Occasional interstitials ("Katherine Johnson," "Ada, Countess of Lovelace") contextualize aspects of Hamilton's life, and photographs and pop culture references elaborate on the era for contemporary readers. Detailing the beginnings of software engineering, the ins and outs of the Apollo missions, and the social arc away from the "men only" establishment, this straightforward read credits a female pioneer whose work brought a concept to life. Ages 10–14. *(Mar.)*

★ Nearer My Freedom: The Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano by Himself

Monica Edinger and Lesley Younge. Zest, $17.99 paper (216p) ISBN 978-1-7284-6407-7

Using the historic autobiography *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* as this book's source material, educators Edinger (*Africa Is My Home*) and Younge, a debut author, craft a moving found-verse narrative that draws from the subject's life to deliver an expansive and textured telling. In this significant adaptation, the authors mirror Equiano's chronological trajectory to outline his early life "in that part of Guinea, Africa... where trade for slaves is carried on"; his time as an enslaved person, during which he "determined to seize the first opportunity/ of making my escape"; and his later occupation as a free abolitionist. According to an introduction, the creators reorganized "a selection of words, phrases, and sentences" from Equiano's text into new and succinct passages, providing an effective and unusual through line to the original. Brief sidebars throughout offer historical context, ensuring that readers grasp the gravity of the subject's experiences. Without losing the source text's emotional heft, Edinger and Younge's visceral poems respectfully provide an effective entry point into the seminal work. A timeline, glossary, and extensive notes conclude. Ages 10–up. *Agent: Stephen Barbara, InkWell Management. (Mar.)* ■

ONLINE ONLY

www.publishersweekly.com

FICTION

Delicious Monsters *Liselle Sambury*. McElderry, ISBN 978-1-66-590349-3, Feb.

★ **The Girl I Am, Was, and Never Will Be: A Speculative Memoir of Transracial Adoption** *Shannon Gibney*. Dutton, ISBN 978-0-5931-1199-4, Jan.

★ **Simon Sort of Says** *Erin Bow*. Disney-Hyperion, ISBN 978-1-368-08285-3, Jan.

Waking Fire (Waking Fire #1) *Jean Louise*. Inkyard, ISBN 978-1-335-42857-8, Jan.

COMICS

Bash! (Bash! #1) *Rudy Gobert and Hellef Bay, trans. from the French by Christopher Pope, illus. by Vince Serrano*. Titan, ISBN 978-1-78773-988-8, Feb.

Choujin X (Choujin X #1) *Sui Ishida, trans. from the Japanese by Jan Mitsuko Cash*. Viz, ISBN 978-1-9747-3669-0, Feb.

Guardian of Fukushima *Fabien Grolleau, trans. from the French by Jenna Martin, illus. by Ewen Blain*. Tokyopop, ISBN 978-1-427-87136-7, Feb.

JANUARY 30, 2023

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YOUR GUIDE TO SELF-PUBLISHING

Cover Redesign ▪ Indie Spotlight ▪ 49 New BookLife Titles Listed ▪ 16 New BookLife Titles Reviewed

"The Plan Was Never to Publish"

How compiling a family history created an indie novelist

BY MARIAN AMO

In the moving novel *Briarhill to Brooklyn: An Irish Family's Journey to Freedom and Opportunity*, Jack Bodkin takes readers along on one family's migration adventure from Ireland to the United States.

What do you hope your readers will take away from your family's journey and hardships?
As I tell book clubs and library groups, we can never forget that

Briarhill to Brooklyn is an immigration story.

Americans are almost all immigrants, and somewhere on everyone's family tree is an ancestor who came to America seeking freedom and opportunity. Those ancestral grandparents and great-grandparents were all brave people who faced the hardship of crossing an ocean—or, in today's world, maybe it's a dangerous trek across a desert or a river. The journey has never been easy, and the immigrant is sometimes not well-received.

Even in the 1850s, when the Irish arrived in America by the thousands, they faced discrimination, persecution, and hatred. Clearly, *Briarhill to Brooklyn* is an Irish immigrant success story, but its message of perseverance and survival resonates with generations of immigrants from many countries.

Of all the family members you mentioned in your book, who is most similar to you in personality and mindset?

In writing *Briarhill to Brooklyn*, I probably put a little bit of myself into several of my characters. Maybe it's weird, but, because I share the given name John with several of my ancestors, at different scenes in my book various characters were written as though from my own perspective—John, the Da; John, the Angel; or Stanley, Martin's oldest son, John Stanley. As a retired CPA, making Cate the family's organizer and "banker" probably also reflects a little of my personality.

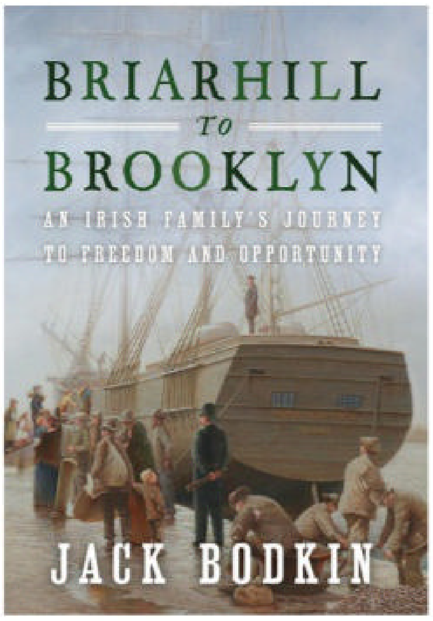
But the character with whom I most closely identify must be Martin, and, after all, he's my great-grandfather. In the 10 chapters in which Martin narrates in his first-person voice, I tried to create a well-rounded character. He's a little gruff and aggressive; he's loyal, a little tender, and compassionate. Martin liked baseball and tipping a glass now and then, and I'm not saying I'm as compassionate and tender as Martin, but I do like baseball and beer.

Are there any family traditions from Ireland that were kept within your family even after they left?

I don't have a list of Irish traditions to add here, and maybe that's part of the reason I wrote *Briarhill to Brooklyn*. Without traditions, I was afraid the story of my family's ancestors—our Irish heritage, the history of their bravery—would be lost in future generations. But I honestly don't know what might have been considered a tradition in potato famine–era Galway. Certainly, there are no recipes, songs, or dances that have been passed down through our family from that era. The losses the family suffered only days after arriving in Brooklyn may have created a rupture in family traditions that we never overcame.

What are some new traditions that were made in the United States?

One tradition made in America might be medicine. While *Briarhill to Brooklyn* is a blend of fact and fiction, it is well-documented that one of the siblings, Dominic, became perhaps the most preeminent physician in Brooklyn. He delivered thousands of babies for Brooklyn's incessantly procreating Irish, German, and Italian immigrant communities. Dominic didn't have any offspring, but his brother Martin had children, and two of Martin's sons, George and Marty, followed in Dominic's footsteps and became doctors. In the next generation, two of George's sons also became Brooklyn doctors, as did one of Marty's. The medical profession skipped my generation, but my son is a doctor, and I have Bodkin cousins whose children are doctors, including—finally—a woman!



What made you decide to self-publish?

Briarhill to Brooklyn was born after a failed attempt to construct a family tree that would be of any interest to my siblings or my kids. The ancestry tree was boring, so my new goal became to write a book documenting my family's story. My plan was that—decades from now—my granddaughter could pass the Bodkin history along to her grandchildren. I didn't have enough facts to write a family history, so after years of trial and error, writing and rewriting, the book became a novel.

In the beginning, the plan was never to publish the book. I even talked to a printer about printing only a few leather-bound copies of what I had written, so I could give them to the family, but the printer's requirements for the cover, professional editing, and interior design encouraged my decision to "do it right" and then sell the book.

What has been your experience in getting your book out to readers?

In the beginning, I thought writing was at times overwhelming, but then I thought the process of learning how to self-publish was just as daunting. After publishing, marketing became the new challenge. It's as tough as I read it would be and seems endless. My wife will tell you I spend more hours each day working on some aspect of marketing than I spent writing. But the effort has its rewards and, with over 16,000 copies sold, I think I'm doing okay.

Looking back over the legacy created by your family, is there anything you wish they could have done differently?
That's hard to answer without being drastic. If Da and Mam Bodkin hadn't decided to come to America, I'd be Irish. However, considering the conditions that existed in County Galway in 1848—famine, starvation, typhus—there is a good possibility I wouldn't be here at all. Without getting into the details of death and migration, the population of Galway declined by about 30% during the famine years, and the odds of Martin (my great-grandfather) dying before I was born are too great for me to imagine being Irish. So, I'm glad we came to America.

I don't know if this qualifies as something I "wish they had done differently," but you'll read in *Briarhill to Brooklyn* that Martin began his family while living in New Jersey and my grandfather was born in Hoboken. I guess I'd rather be a third-generation New Yorker!

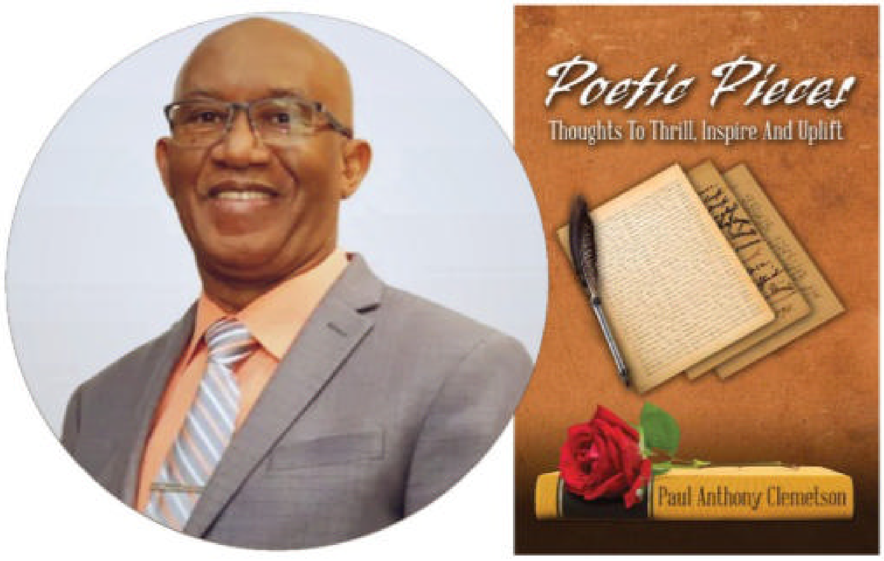
Brooklyn has changed a lot over the past few decades in terms of demographics and economic opportunities. How has your family dealt with the constantly changing N.Y.C. landscape?
Most of my line of Bodkins began moving to Long Island around 1950. Some stayed in Brooklyn—at least part-time—through the '60s, and at least one of my Bodkin cousins lived in Brooklyn for decades. I don't know if I ever asked my parents why we left Brooklyn, but I can guess it was in search of more green space for what would eventually be our large family. Or maybe it was my father's desire to commute to New York on the LIRR for an hour every day for 30 years.

I visited and walked around Brooklyn a couple of years ago and was pleased to see the restoration and preservation in many of the neighborhoods where the Bodkins had lived, but disappointed by others.

What advice would you give to someone considering a big move into a new country or state?
Go for it—take the risk, be ready to work hard, and enjoy the experience.

Q&A SPONSORED

BookLife Talks with Paul Clemetson



In his latest book, Clemetson explores his life through poetry and seeks to inspire readers in a myriad of ways.

What motivated you to write *Poetic Pieces*?
I was driven by the desire to positively influence others through thoughts composed to motivate, inspire, and instill hope and the fortitude to persist amid challenges, difficulties, and distractions. My passion for being a source of inspiration to others opened up a new horizon, which channeled my thoughts in poetic form. The compositions were few at first, but then they began dominating the way my ideas were structured to convey messages that are uplifting and inspiring. Progressively, this way of working enabled me to present ideas in poetry in a very natural way. Life experiences—whether personal, observed, or shared with me by others—have also shaped many of the poems I have written. One dominant experience was the rapid deterioration and passing of my son.

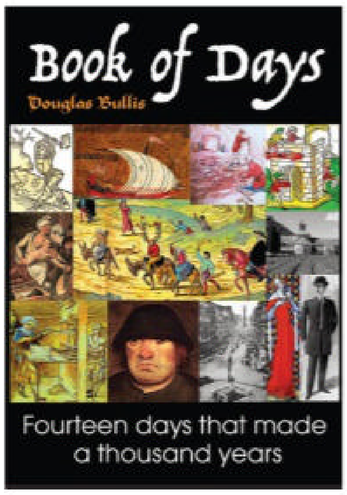
Was there anything you wanted to include but couldn't?
Some aspects of life's realities are very delicate and sensitive, and must be presented in a clear yet abstract way. I have managed to include all that I desired to present in this version of *Poetic Pieces*. The reader will find a few works fascinating and something that they have to unravel.

For more, visit **booklife.com/clemetson**

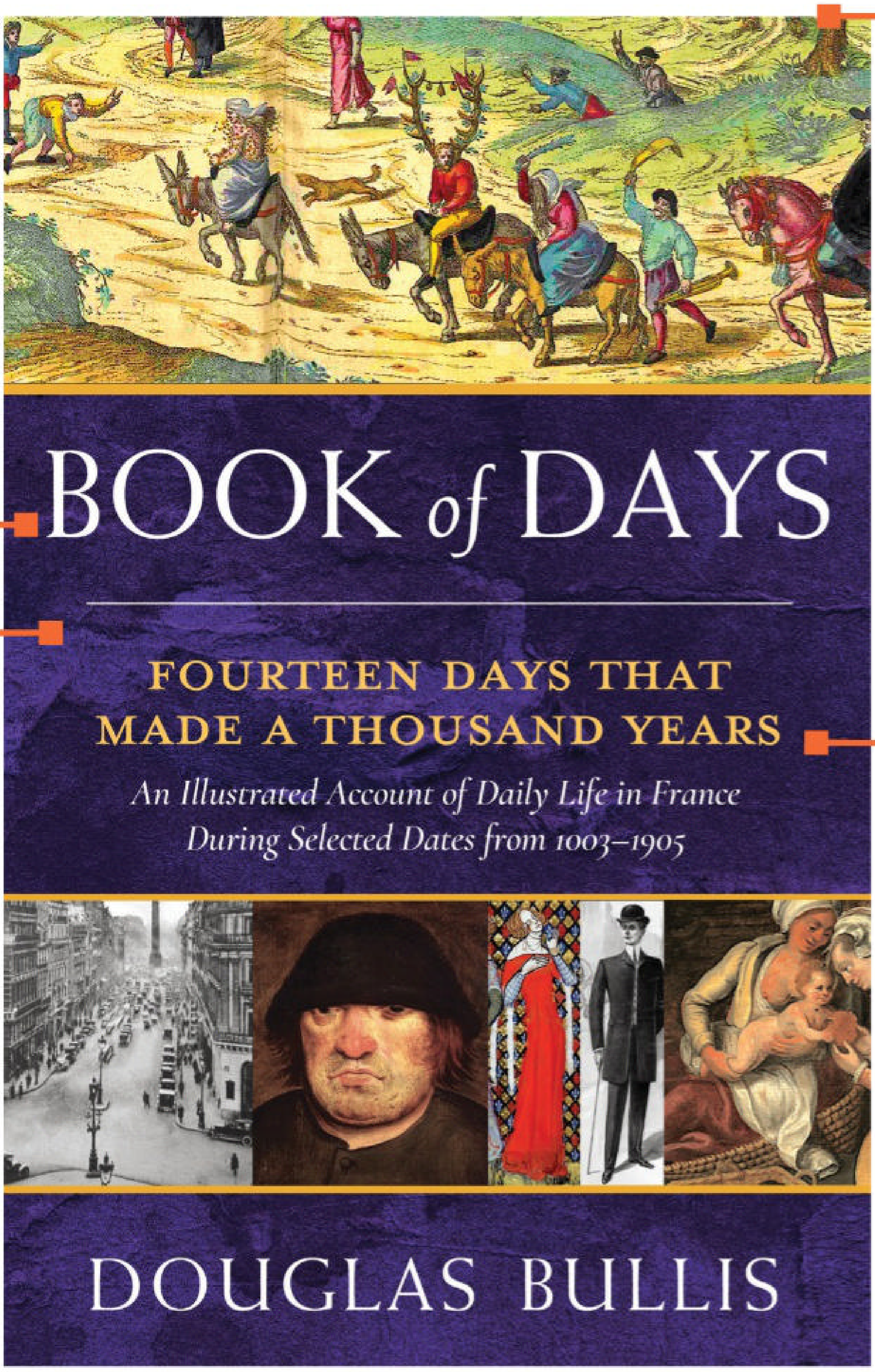
Cover Redesign

Michelle Argyle at Melissa Williams Design reimagines the cover of *Book of Days* by Douglas Bullis.

To submit a book for a free cover redesign, email us at booklifeeditor@booklife.com.


Book of Days
Douglas Bullis
Fourteen days that made a thousand years

Original cover


BOOK of DAYS
FOURTEEN DAYS THAT MADE A THOUSAND YEARS
An Illustrated Account of Daily Life in France During Selected Dates from 1003–1905
DOUGLAS BULLIS

I wanted to create a cleaner look to the fonts, as the current font feels a little less professional. Using a crisp, easy-to-read serif works well.

I decided to go with a dark purple to complement everything else. Purple is often associated with wisdom, spirituality, and wealth. Reading through portions of the book, I felt this was an appropriate color.

I love the brightness and immediate historical feel of the images on the original cover, so I wanted to keep those in the redesign. Rearranging them gave me space to rethink the placement and fonts.

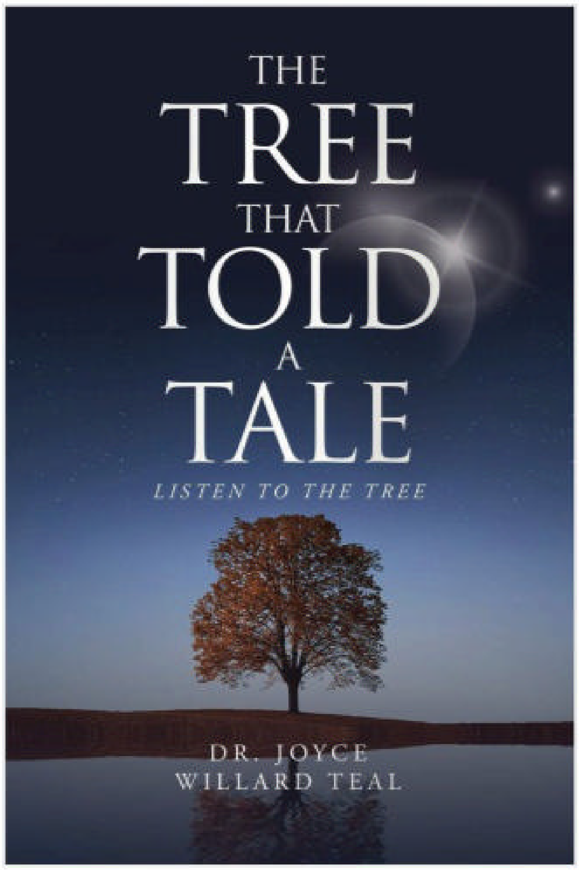
When I first saw the original cover, I struggled to figure out what the book was about. Including a secondary subtitle alleviates this issue.

BookLife Talks with Joyce Willard Teal

Teal's latest book is a children's title about a tree that stands next to the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala. *The Tree That Told a Tale* not only narrates the bombing of the church in 1963 by members of the Ku Klux Klan but also conveys factual information about trees.

Why did you choose this subject matter for a children's book?
I'm interested in encouraging children to learn more about Black history and Black historical events. I also know that when children become interested in these types of events, their interest is piqued and they begin to seek out other things of historical significance.

Why or how do you think *The Tree That Told a Tale* is particularly relevant now?
I think it is particularly relevant now because we are nearing Black History Month and also because children generally need to know more about trees. They need to know that a tree does not reach its most productive stage of carbon storage for about 10 years, and other such important facts. I hope the book will encourage them to research some of the trees in their environments and learn more about them.



What research did you do to ensure historical accuracy?
My research allowed me to include general facts about trees, which I've included at the back of the book. I also conducted research to make sure that the historical facts I included are accurate.

> "I'm interested in encouraging children to learn more about Black history and Black historical events.
>
> – Joyce Willard Teal

What responsibility do you think authors have when reimagining people or events that have actually happened?
I think authors have the responsibility to report accurately when reimagining people or events that have actually happened.

What are you currently working on?
Currently, I am not working on a book.

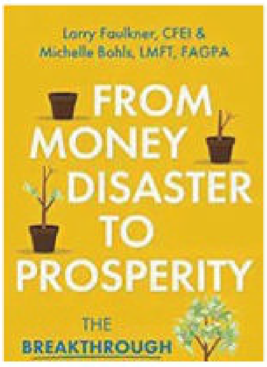
For more, visit **booklife.com/teal**

Indie Spotlight

In this month's thematic roundup of BookLife titles, we're ushering in 2023 with indie self-help and growth-focused books.

Want to see your book featured? Check out the Indie Spotlight calendar at booklife.com/indiespotlight.

FINANCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

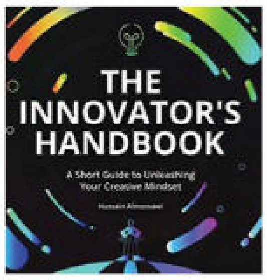

Larry Faulkner, CFEI &
Michelle Bohls, LMFT, FAGPA
FROM MONEY DISASTER TO PROSPERITY
THE BREAKTHROUGH

From Money Disaster to Prosperity: The Breakthrough Formula

Larry Faulkner and Michelle Bohls

ASIN B09MYVXLPW

Author statement: "*From Money Disaster to Prosperity* utilizes a psychological approach to overcoming persistent money problems. Just like common emotional problems, money is linked to your past history and the perspective that history gave you. Much of the impetus for this book is from my [Larry's] work inside jails teaching prisoners how to rebuild their financial lives upon release. Although this is an extreme example, it became clear how our past—and the perspective it provides us—so often derails our best financial intentions."

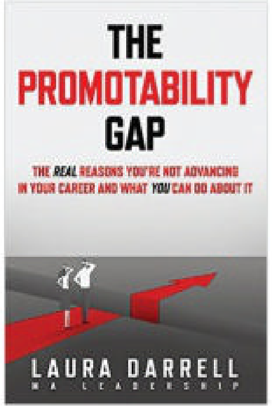

THE INNOVATOR'S HANDBOOK
A Short Guide to Unleashing Your Creative Mindset
Hussain Almossawi

The Innovator's Handbook: A Short Guide to Unleashing Your Creative Mindset

Hussain Almossawi

ISBN 978-1-73785-080-9

Author statement: "I started writing this book as a collection of my insights after having the opportunity to work with some of the world's most innovative companies. I started by sharing my ideas in talks that I gave at design and innovation conferences, as well as workshops and classes that I taught at different universities. Seeing how engaged the audience was, I decided to put all these thoughts into one place, while referencing personal and industry stories."


THE PROMOTABILITY GAP
THE REAL REASONS YOU'RE NOT ADVANCING IN YOUR CAREER AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT
LAURA DARRELL
MA LEADERSHIP

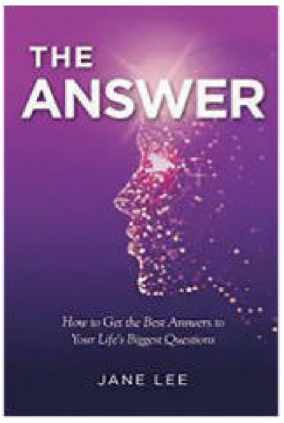
The Promotability Gap: The Real Reasons You're Not Advancing in Your Career and What You Can Do About It

Laura Darrell

ASIN B0BQ5996N2

Author statement: "I spent my entire career leading people and teams and investing in their personal and professional development to help them advance their careers. This book captures the very best of that professional development experience, aims to help others figure out why they aren't advancing in their careers, and gives specific development advice and tools to help them close those gaps."

SELF-ACTUALIZATION AND SELF-HELP

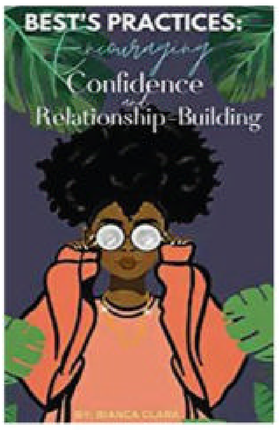

THE ANSWER
How to Get the Best Answers to Your Life's Biggest Questions
JANE LEE

The Answer: How to Get the Best Answers to Your Life's Biggest Questions

Jane Lee

ISBN 978-1-77819-310-1

Author statement: "*The Answer* will help you tune into the ever-present inner wisdom and intuition we all have as a means to determine the best answers for all your life's critical questions. At 38 years old, while I was pursuing fertility treatments, I was unexpectedly diagnosed with colon cancer. That very same day, I was also offered my 'dream job.' In that moment, I felt like the universe was asking me, 'What are you going to choose—your health or your career?' While I didn't know it then, that was the start of my journey to writing *The Answer*."

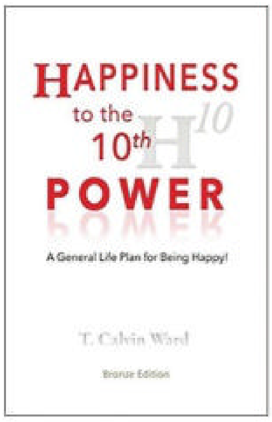

BEST'S PRACTICES: Encouraging Confidence and Relationship-Building
BY: BIANCA CLARK

Best's Practices: Encouraging Confidence and Relationship Building

Bianca Clark

ASIN B0BNGR7NVL

Author statement: "After graduating college, I was in the company of a lot of seasoned professionals who assumed I knew things such as proper dining etiquette, or how to utilize soft skills. I found myself taking crash courses to prepare and save myself embarrassment. These 'life' crash courses were helpful for the moment but I found that when I dedicated ample time to thoroughly understand and train myself for these moments, my confidence was built. I was motivated to write an inspirational book for preteens, teens, and young adults because of my personal experiences navigating throughout professional spaces while developing my career."


HAPPINESS
to the 10th POWER
A General Life Plan for Being Happy!
T. Calvin Ward
Bronze Edition

Happiness to the 10th Power

T. Calvin Ward

ISBN 978-1-977254-01-6

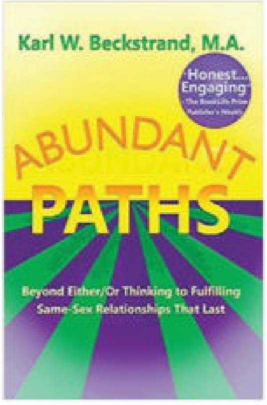
Author statement: "I wanted to develop a book on happiness everybody would find beneficial. No pie-in-the-sky ideas or abstract concepts here. Thousands of hours of research and interviews are incorporated into the pages of *Happiness to the 10th Power*."

RELATIONSHIPS AND SELF-CARE

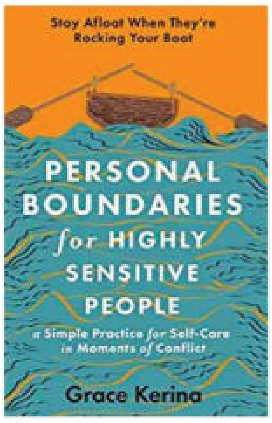
Abundant Paths: Beyond Either/Or Thinking to Fulfilling Same-Sex Relationships That Last

Karl W. Beckstrand

978-1-951599-18-8


Karl W. Beckstrand, M.A.
Honest... Engaging
ABUNDANT PATHS
Beyond Either/Or Thinking to Fulfilling Same-Sex Relationships That Last

Author statement: "Regardless of marital status or sexual orientation, every person has legitimate needs for love and true union, including with those of one's own sex. There are more kinds of connection, deeper than we know. Real love isn't about wanting, but wanting the best for someone. When true needs are met generous feelings can replace discouragement, isolation, even infidelity. I wrote this book to share what I've learned about establishing lasting, deep same-sex bonds."


Stay Afloat When They're Rocking Your Boat
PERSONAL BOUNDARIES for HIGHLY SENSITIVE PEOPLE
a Simple Practice for Self-Care in Moments of Conflict
Grace Kerina

Personal Boundaries for Highly Sensitive People: A Simple Practice for Self-Care in Moments of Conflict

Grace Kerina

ASIN B0BQZMCMC6

Author statement: "This handy guide offers a system for developing personal boundary skills so they pop to the surface like a life preserver in the moments they're needed. For years I worked to move beyond feeling like I could either be my authentic self or interact with people, but not do both at once. When friends and clients began to compliment my

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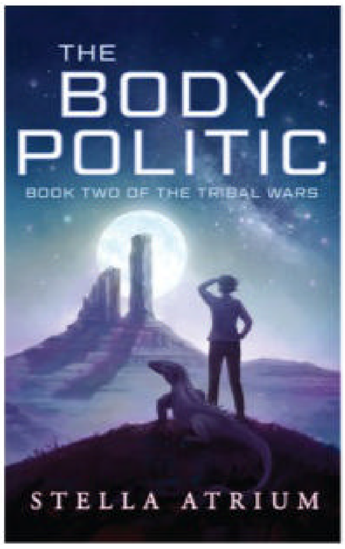
Q&A SPONSORED

BookLife Talks with Stella Atrium

With two books now published in the Tribal Wars series, each with Editor's Picks from BookLife, it's no wonder BookLife Reviews said of the second book, *The Body Politic*, that "lovers of rich, thoughtful, culture-exploring SF will relish Atrium's series." With the third book publishing this May, we spoke with Atrium about her inspiration for the series.

While *The Body Politic* takes place on a different planet, the historic evils of colonization are very much present. What was it like navigating that?

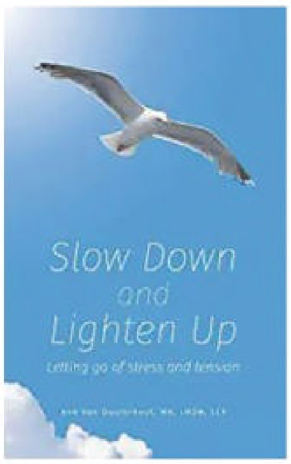
I have always wondered how women survive in a conflict zone. Where are the stories of their endurance and backbone and personal losses? We don't even have statistics for how many die each year from famine or among Native Americans, for example. What options do they act on to escape their circumstances or to help others escape? How do they manage their children? What lore do they teach that provides cohesiveness within the group? These questions keep me awake at night.


THE BODY POLITIC
BOOK TWO OF THE TRIBAL WARS
STELLA ATRIUM

When can readers expect the next book in the series?

Home Rule: Book III of The Tribal Wars is due out in May 2023. Photojournalist Hershel Henry takes up the narrative and tries to make sense of the internal struggles among the tribes. He meets some of the female characters we've already followed for 800 pages, and since the reader knows more about these women than Henry does, it provides a delicious dichotomy.

For more, visit **booklife.com/atrium**



boundaries and ask me for help with their own, I took a closer look at the process I'd organically developed. The result is the system offered in this book."

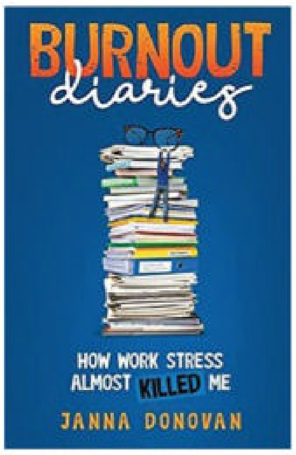
Slow Down and Lighten Up: Letting Go of Stress and Tension

Bob Van Oosterhout

ISBN 978-0-9707781-1-6

Author statement: "I was a high-stress type-A guy in my early 20s. As a psychologist I realized I needed to get my own act together in order to help other people. A former professor whom I had kept in touch with for 20 years continually challenged me to discern the core, essential principles of what was effective in my work. I was asked to develop a course in stress management for the nursing program at the college where I worked, and taught the class for 38 years. As I wrote *Slow Down and Lighten Up*, I tried to use clear, simple terms to describe the essential components of what was consistently helpful not only to me, but to the clients, students, and workshop participants I have been honored to serve over the past 50 years."

MEMOIRS

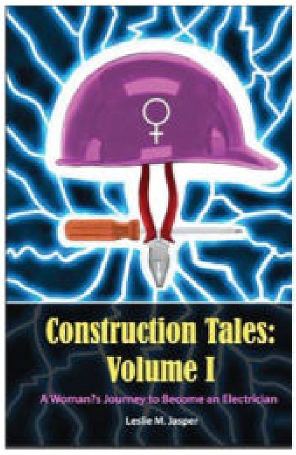


Burnout Diaries: How Work Stress Almost Killed Me

Janna Donovan

ISBN 978-1-73757-651-8

Author statement: "I wrote this book to show how we survive tough times and dark periods brought on by work. It goes much deeper into my life than I ever planned. I was ashamed that readers would see my desperation, my hidden fear that I was cracking apart, and the doubts I had about whether I would even survive the experience. After 15 years of reflection, obtaining my master's in counseling psychology, and the realization that my story might help someone else, I was ready to tell my personal, painful voyage."

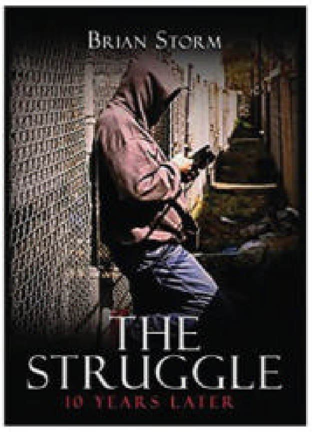


Construction Tales: Volume I: A Woman's Journey to Become an Electrician

Leslie M. Jasper

ASIN B00FBJ9GVE

Author statement: "Strap on your work boots and put on your hard hat. Let me take you on a sheetrock-dusted journey to see what it is like to work within the construction industry. The work is hard, the environment is unforgiving, and the jobsite can be either extremely hot or cold. Over 29 years ago, I stepped foot into a male-dominated work environment. Despite the lack of a warm embrace, I pushed my way into this world to learn the trade. This book encourages women and minorities to push past any doubt and go for exactly what they want in life."



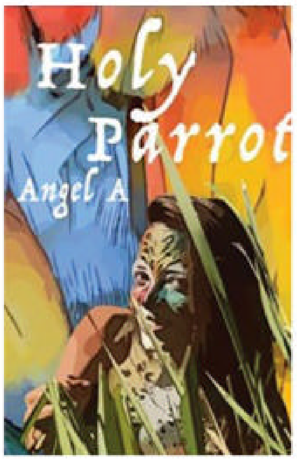
The Struggle: 10 Years Later

Brian Storm

ASIN B0BGSRNDMX

Author statement: "As a recovering addict and alcoholic, I learned that helping others is what helps me to stay clean and sober. So I wrote this story to try to help other addicts and alcoholics. However, I wanted to take it a step further and write it in a way that could also help non-addicts understand why addicts behave the way that they do."

FICTION

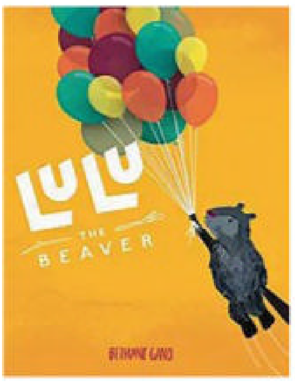


Holy Parrot

Angel A.

ISBN 978-0-9876222-5-9

Author statement: "This novel is the product of decades of research on the topic of personal growth or awakening as explored through science and spirituality. The two are often portrayed as being in conflict. *Holy Parrot* brings the disciplines together in a harmonious vision for the emerging Age of Aquarius."



Lulu the Beaver

Bethany Gano

ISBN 978-1-73614-726-9

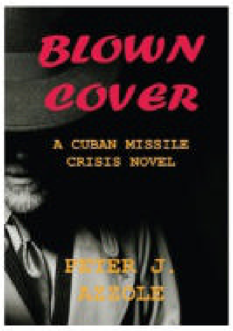
Author statement: "Lulu tries to be a typical beaver, but her dream of being an artist is getting out! Despite her friends' encouragement, Lulu's struggle with fear and self-doubt has led her into a pattern of destroying her artwork—until an unexpected encounter changes Lulu, and the forest, for good. The truth is, Lulu is me. I had been creating art and design for over 20 years, but never shared it publicly before launching Lulu's crowdfunding campaign (Kickstarter). Lulu's story helps kids to reframe their thinking—that who they are and what they have to share matters. A lot." ■

New Titles from Self-Publishers

Booksellers, publishers, librarians, and agents are encouraged to look at the 49 self-published titles below. Each appears with a list of retailers that are selling the book and a description provided by its author. Some of these writers are waiting to be discovered; others have track records and followings and are doing it on their own. If you are a self-published author interested in listing titles in this section, please visit publishersweekly.com/pw-select for more information.

Fiction

Blown Cover: A Cuban Missile Crisis Novel



Peter J. Azzole. KDP. $13.99 paper (196p), ISBN 979-83-523-7729-1; $5.99 e-book, ASIN B0BK2P3JPM

Amazon

Undercover radio intercept and reporting about Soviet activity in Cuba was dangerous. The CIA-Navy plan was bulletproof, until it wasn't.

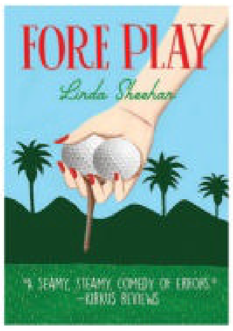
The Dream Lord

Johnathan P. Blackwell. Dorrance Publishing. $19 paper (218p), ISBN 979-88-85271-53-0; $14 e-book, ISBN 979-88-85278-78-2

Amazon, BN.com, Dorrance Publishing

Join the Dream Lord, guardian of your inner self and creator of your most intimate fantasies, to step into the world of dreams. You will witness the mystic possibilities of the mind and passions of reality.

Fore Play

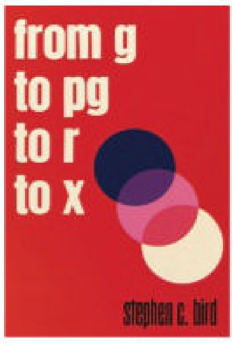


Linda Sheehan. Black Rose Writing. $19.95 paper (235p), ISBN 978-1-68433-916-7; $5.99 e-book, ASIN B09WCT3VHV

Amazon, BN.com, BAM!

At Bellstone Country Club there's lust, larceny, adultery, and embezzlement—all on the first nine holes.

From G to PG to R to X

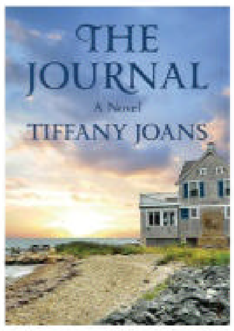


Stephen C. Bird. Hysterical Dementia. $15 paper (178p), ISBN 979-82-18-02391-1; $2.99 e-book, ASIN B0BJWXMM71

Amazon, BookBaby

Death, dystopia, hallucinations, political turmoil, gender confusion, morphing identities, secret ceremonies, epiphanies, and transformation inform the chaos of this tragicomic novella.

The Journal

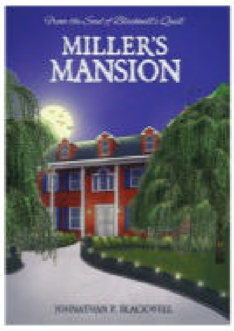


Tiffany Joans. Endeavor Holdings. $14.99 paper (296p), ISBN 979-8-218-10384-2; $9.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-3507-0229-3

Amazon

On Illumination Night, the hidden ties between Cadence and Michael are unraveled, and what they discover threatens to break the bonds they have forged.

Miller's Mansion: From the Soul of Blackwell's Quill

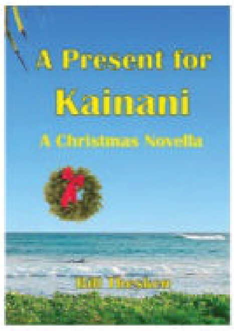


Johnathan P. Blackwell. Dorrance Publishing. $19 paper (236p), ISBN 978-1-63867-195-4; $14 e-book, ISBN 978-1-63867-724-6

Amazon, BN.com, Dorrance Publishing

Charlie, a love-starved mortal, gets more than he bargained for when he purchases the mysterious Miller's Mansion. With the house comes a host of heated and bizarre passions and an otherworldly woman of his dreams or nightmares.

A Present for Kainani: A Christmas Novella



Bill Thesken. Koloa Publishing. $8.99 paper (138p), ISBN 978-1-73725-216-0; 99¢ e-book, ASIN B0BNT6ZW1J

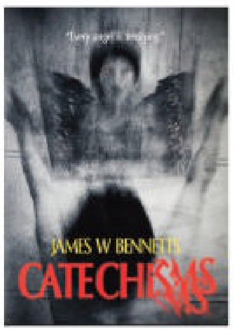
Amazon, Ingram

Santa and Mrs. Claus travel to Hawaii to deliver a present that fell out of the bag on Christmas Eve. While Mrs. Claus reads romance novels by the pool in Waikiki, Santa goes rogue.

Mystery/Thriller

Catechisms

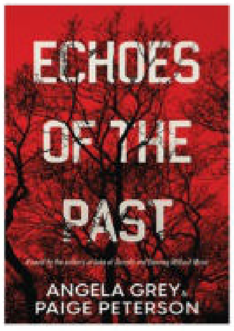
James W. Bennetts. BookBaby. $16.99 paper


JAMES W BENNETT'S
CATECHISMS

(400p), ISBN 978-1-66787-365-7; $5.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-66787-366-4
Amazon, BN.com, BookBaby

A detective is pitted against a murderer and the cover-up of a priest's abuse.

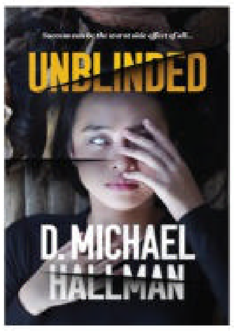
Echoes of the Past


ECHOES OF THE PAST
ANGELA GREY
PAIGE PETERSON

Angela Grey and Paige Peterson. KDP. $19.99 (256p), ISBN 979-83-66475-75-4; $13.99 paper, ISBN 979-83-589-9823-0
Amazon

A mystery loosely inspired by a variety of Minnesota events. Has destiny caught up with everyone involved, or is there a serial killer in the north country woods?

Unblinded

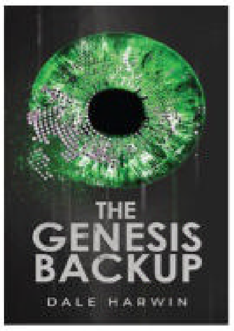

UNBLINDED
D. MICHAEL HALLMAN

D. Michael Hallman. Reality Road Press. $10.99 paper (290), ISBN 979-8-9856035-1-4; $2.99 e-book, ISBN 979-8-9856035-2-1
Ingram

A miracle drug restores sight to the blind but has some killer side effects. And not just for the patients.

SF/Fantasy/Horror

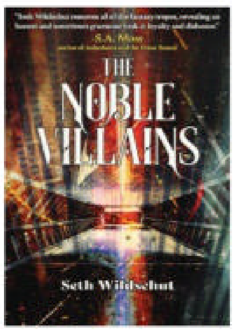
The Genesis Backup


THE GENESIS BACKUP
DALE HARWIN

Dale Harwin. Dale Harwin. $14.99 paper (408p), ISBN 979-83-63874-71-0; $2.99 e-book, ASIN B0BMM92X57
Amazon, BN.com, Books-a-Million

When William Ell investigates the murder of his father, a successful IT entrepreneur, he discovers that true artificial intelligence is a reality. But reality is not what it seems.

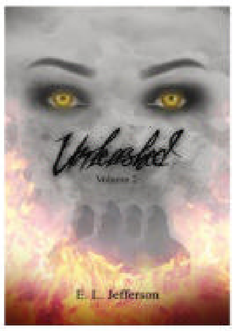
The Noble Villains (The Forge Born Trilogy #1)


THE NOBLE VILLAINS
Seth Wildschut

Seth Wildschut. Sean Moss–ZipItOut Studios. $12 paper (453p), ISBN 979-85-976653-0-6; 99¢ e-book, ASIN B08THPW5WB
Amazon, Google Play, Kobo

Ex-soldier Darragh Moonford operates in society as an outlaw after being cast out by a kingdom that no longer needs him. No more kings, no more empires—the forge war begins.

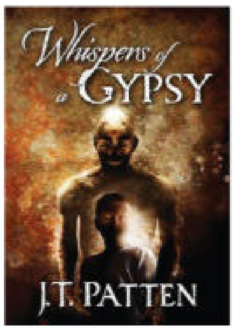
Unleashed, Vol. 2


Unleashed
Volume 2
E. L. Jefferson

E.L. Jefferson. E.L. Books. $10 paper (164p), ISBN 978-1-66292-980-9
Amazon

She is the product of man's own greed. She is the beauty who stalks the night. Her chosen name is Raven, and she is death that walks.

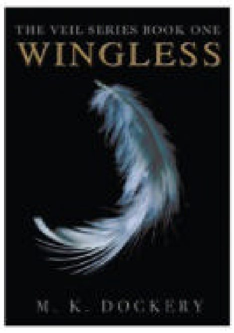
Whispers of a Gypsy: A Supernatural Dark Thriller of Suspense and Horror


Whispers of a GYPSY
J.T. PATTEN

JT Patten. Helbound Productions. $16.99 paper (216p), ISBN 979-89-87300-51-0; $4.99 e-book, ASIN B0BLXHGVKF
Amazon

In this story, dark with twists, a uniquely gifted boy falls into a dangerous cat-and-mouse game with the arrival of a monstrous protector searching for something of the past.

Wingless (The Veil Series #1)


THE VEIL SERIES BOOK ONE
WINGLESS
M. K. DOCKERY

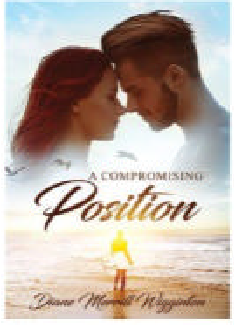
M.K. Dockery. Literature Drips Publishing. $17.99 paper (435p), ISBN 978-1-73792-272-8; $4.99 e-book, ASIN B0BK684ZCV
Amazon, BN.com

The truth of the past and the fate of the future depend on two. One is an unlikely hero, and the other is a danger or potential savior to all.

Romance/Erotica

A Compromising Position

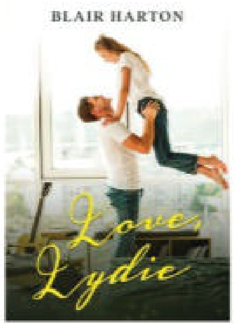
Diane Merrill Wigginton. Jeweled Dagger


A COMPROMISING
Position
Diane Merrill Wigginton

Publishing. $16.99 paper (293p), ISBN 978-1-946146-11-3; $2.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-946146-10-6
Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com

This suspenseful romance is set against the backdrop of Florida beaches and politics as Catherine and Ryan attempt to find a compromise, and their happily ever after, together.

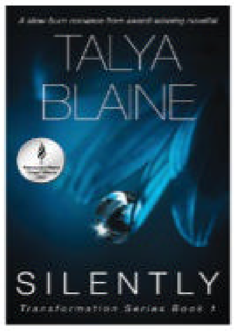
Love, Lydie


BLAIR HARTON
Love, Lydie

Blair Harton. Blair Harton Writes. $14.99 paper (584p), ISBN 979-88-459-7718-2; $2.99 e-book, ASIN B0BCHK45ZD
Amazon, BN.com

Life has a wild way of bringing people together. For three strangers, a series of letters unites them. Unearth the clues of this whimsical romance.

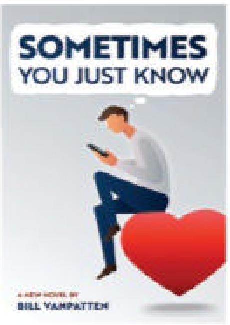
Silently (Transformation #1)


TALYA BLAINE
SILENTLY
Transformation Series Book 1

Talya Blaine. Talya Blaine Books. $13.99 paper (161p), ISBN 978-1-959336-03-7; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-959336-00-6
Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com, Kobo

One brazen move. Two simple rules. At its heart, this is a story about overcoming devastating loss and the unexpected people and places that help us begin to heal.

Sometimes You Just Know

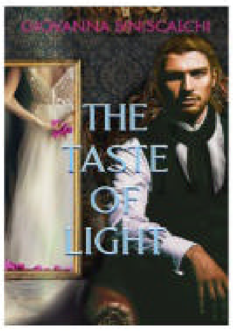

SOMETIMES YOU JUST KNOW
A NEW NOVEL BY
BILL VANPATTEN

Bill VanPatten. Bill VanPatten. $10.99 paper (293p), ISBN 979-83-62790-37-0; $4.99 e-book, ASIN B0BM6GVMXY

Amazon

Can a 30-year-old man overcome his fears and find love? With the help of a new friend, Arnie Violet embarks on a journey of self-discovery and learns to lean into life.

The Taste of Light


GIOVANNA SINISCALCHI
THE TASTE OF LIGHT

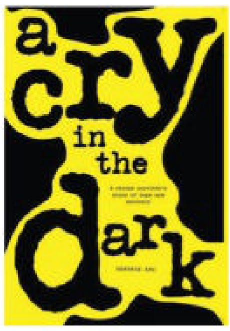
Giovanna Siniscalchi. Giovanna Siniscalchi. $4.99 e-book, ASIN B0BMMBJD4B

Amazon

A girl with dawn in her eyes doesn't belong in Pedro's shadows, but now that she's floated into his life, he will battle whoever dares to take her from him.

Nonfiction

A Cry in the Dark: A Stroke Survivor's Story of Hope and Recovery

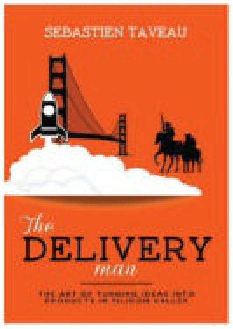

a cry in the dark

Terence Ang. Focus Publishing. $25 paper (148p), ISBN 978-981-1844-00-3

Amazon

The story of one man's journey to rediscover his voice, reclaim his dignity, and emerge stronger after a stroke.

The Delivery Man: The Art of Turning Ideas into Products in Silicon Valley


SEBASTIEN TAVEAU
The DELIVERY man

Sebastien Taveau. Tavo Reno Publishing. $19.95 paper (183p), ISBN 979-89-87047-41-5; $2.99 e-book, ISBN 979-89-87047-40-8

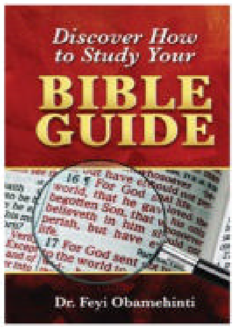
Amazon

Discover the story of the invisible crowd who deliver services, products, and experiences for the Big Shot.

Discover How to Study Your Bible Guide: Bible Study Guide

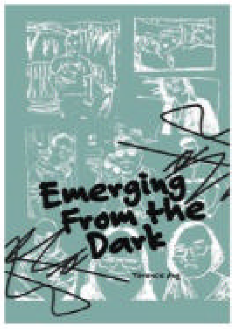
Feyi Obamehinti. Feyi Obamehinti. $19.50 (75p), ISBN 979-83-66756-75-4; $10.50 paper, ISBN 979-83-65374-24-9

Amazon


Discover How to Study Your
BIBLE GUIDE
Dr. Feyi Obamehinti

Learn how to study the Bible for yourself, and discover why studying the Bible is beneficial. Includes sample plans to study the Bible and how to assess your growth.

Emerging from the Dark

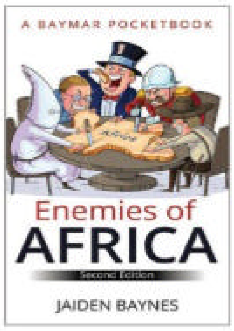

Emerging From the Dark

Terence Ang. Terence Ang. $29.99 paper (192p), ISBN 979-83-7103-923-1

Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com, Kobo, Smashwords

This book will change the way you see people recovering from strokes.

Enemies of Africa, Second Edition

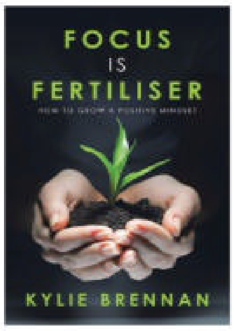

A BAYMAR POCKETBOOK
Enemies of AFRICA
Second Edition
JAIDEN BAYNES

Jaiden Baynes. Baymar Publishing. $22.99 paper (174p), ISBN 978-1-77808-874-2; $7.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-77808-875-9

Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com

An exposé shining new light on Africa's users and abusers, from the past to the present.

Focus Is Fertiliser: How to Grow a Positive Mindset


FOCUS IS FERTILISER
KYLIE BRENNAN

Kylie Brennan. Balboa Press Au. $8.99 paper (100p), ISBN 978-1-5043-2406-9; $3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-5043-2407-6

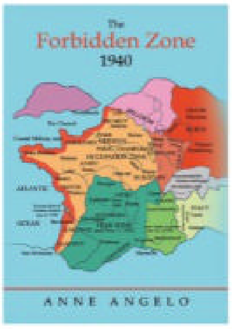
Amazon

With three simple steps, this book offers a profound shift to a growth mindset that changes the way one thinks, works, and feels.

The Forbidden Zone 1940

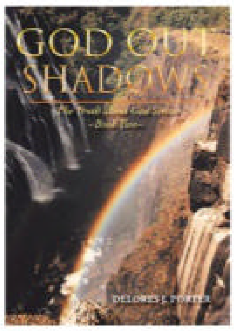
Anne Angelo. Xlibris AU. $14.31 paper (240p), ISBN 978-1-66988-840-6; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-66988-839-0

Amazon


The Forbidden Zone 1940
ANNE ANGELO

Trapped in the German occupation, one woman joined the French Resistance. But when the Gestapo found out about her and she was inevitably betrayed, she had to go back to Scotland.

God out of the Shadows (The Truth About God #2)

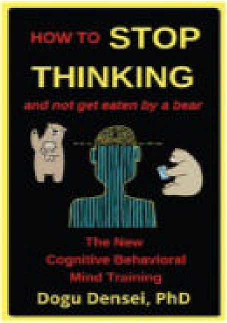

GOD OUT OF THE SHADOWS
DELORES J. PORTER

Delores J. Porter. Xlibris US. $19.99 paper (356p), ISBN 978-1-66980-603-5; $3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-66980-602-8

Amazon

This book addresses the fables in today's Christian doctrine that are not the message of Jesus Christ. Scripture proves that God has never orchestrated the adversities in anyone's life.

How to Stop Thinking and Not Get Eaten by a Bear: The New Cognitive Behavioral Mind Training

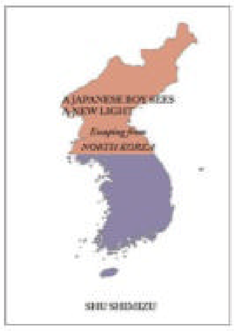

HOW TO STOP THINKING
and not get eaten by a bear
The New Cognitive Behavioral Mind Training
Dogu Densei, PhD

Dogu Densei. Caduxeus Press. $24.99 paper (704p), ISBN 979-89-86338-94-1; $9.99 e-book, ISBN 979-89-86338-93-4

Amazon

This book explores how to integrate psychology, meditation, mindfulness, spirituality, and consciousness exploration to achieve goals of wellness, well-being, and beyond.

A Japanese Boy Sees a New Light: Escaping from North Korea

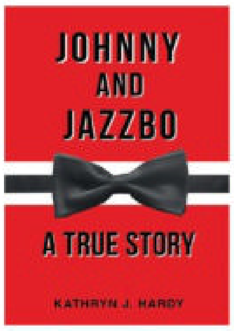

A JAPANESE BOY SEES A NEW LIGHT
Escaping from NORTH KOREA
SHU SHIMIZU

Shu Shimizu. Partridge Singapore. $13.27 paper (138p), ISBN 978-1-5437-7095-7; $3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-5437-7096-4

Amazon

One Japanese boy experienced imperialism, communism, and democracy in the Korean peninsula less than a year before and after WWII. Find out how he survived the harsh North Korean winter as a refugee.

Johnny and Jazzbo: A True Story


JOHNNY AND JAZZBO
A TRUE STORY
KATHRYN J. HARDY

Kathryn J. Hardy. Archway Publishing. $45 (662p), ISBN 978-1-66571-454-9; $35 paper, ISBN 978-1-66571-453-2
Kathrynjhardybooks.com, Amazon

Two extraordinary Southern men rise above the tumultuous times of the '60s in America to learn the true meaning of compassion, love, and friendship.

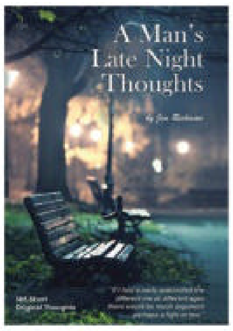
Linux Mint 21: Desktops and Administration

Linux Mint 21
Desktops and Administration
Richard Petersen

Richard Petersen. Surfing Turtle Press. $45 paper (632p), ISBN 978-1-949857-31-3; $26 e-book, ISBN 978-1-949857-29-0
Amazon

Linux mint 21 (Vanessa) is based on the Ubuntu 22.04 LTR (Long Term Release). The Cinnamon and Mate desktops are examined in detail.

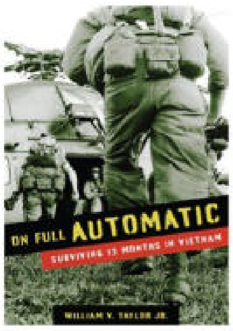
A Man's Late Night Thoughts


A Man's Late Night Thoughts

James Richman. Book Vine Press. $27.95 (367p), ISBN 978-1-957781-44-0
Amazon

These thoughts convey meanings to those things we so often contemplate and try to understand.

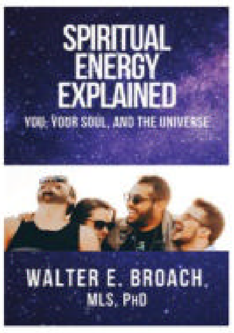
On Full Automatic: Surviving 13 Months in Vietnam


ON FULL AUTOMATIC
SURVIVING 13 MONTHS IN VIETNAM
WILLIAM V. TAYLOR JR.

William V. Taylor Jr. Deep Water Press. $19.95 paper (341p), ISBN 978-1-73662-160-8; $6.99 e-book, ASIN B09D5STQRC
Amazon, Apple iBooks

Marine recruit Taylor and his brother Marines push through back-to-back operations with little time to rest or reflect. Survivors will be ensnared by memories of a real yet surreal nightmare. After more than 50 years of holding everything in, Taylor shares his experience in explicit and often horrific detail and with a reverent honor for those Marines who did not live to tell the tale.

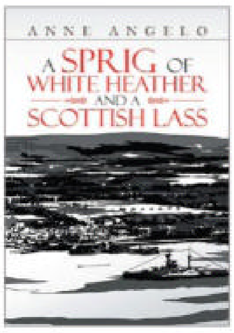
Spiritual Energy Explained: You, Your Soul, and the Universe


SPIRITUAL ENERGY EXPLAINED
YOU, YOUR SOUL, AND THE UNIVERSE
WALTER E. BROACH, MLS, PhD

Walter E. Broach. Dorrance Publishing Co. $33 (268p), ISBN 979-88-85270-77-9; $20 paper, ISBN 979-88-85270-74-8
Amazon

You are a spiritual entity spending time on Earth wearing a physical body. You constantly manifest your future with your thoughts and feelings.

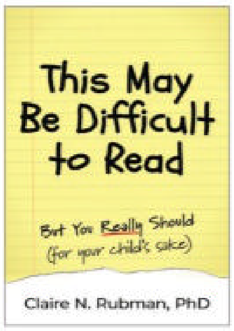
A Sprig of White Heather and a Scottish Lass


ANNE ANGELO
A SPRIG OF WHITE HEATHER AND A SCOTTISH LASS

Anne Angelo. Xlibris AU. $11.58 paper (192p), ISBN 978-1-66988-837-6; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-66988-836-9
Amazon

This is the story of Anne Angelo, a Scottish lass, and her journey full of hardships as well as her experiences when the unthinkable WWII was declared.

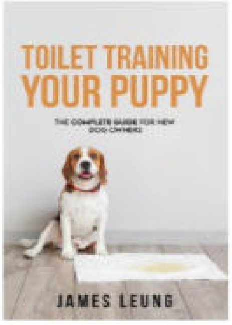
This May Be Difficult to Read: But You Really Should (for Your Child's Sake)


This May Be Difficult to Read
But You Really Should (for your child's sake)
Claire N. Rubman, PhD

Claire N. Rubman. Education & Parenting Matters. $19.99 paper (234p), ISBN 979-89-87086-11-7; $8.49 e-book, ISBN 979-89-87086-10-0
Amazon, BN.com

Make reading fun for you and your child by creating a "need to read" in your daily life. Don't let your child be among the one in five college freshmen who have to take a remedial reading class.

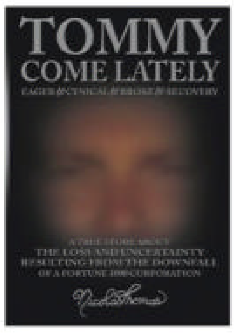
Toilet Training Your Puppy: The Complete Guide for New Dog Owners


TOILET TRAINING YOUR PUPPY
THE COMPLETE GUIDE FOR NEW DOG OWNERS
JAMES LEUNG

James Leung. James Leung. $4.99 e-book, ISBN 979-82-15-17058-8; $11.99 audio, ISBN 979-88-226-5375-7
BN.com, Google Play, Kobo

This book provides resources to help dog owners develop a personalized approach that matches their particular lifestyles, circumstances, and needs.

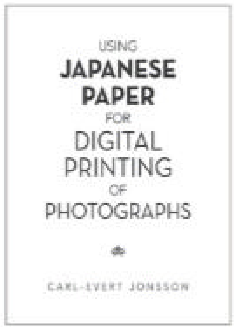
Tommy Come Lately: The True Story About the Loss and Uncertainty Resulting from the Downfall of a Fortune 1000 Corporation


TOMMY COME LATELY

Nicolas Thomas. Draft2Digital. $15.99 paper (249p), ISBN 979-82-15-29736-0; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 979-82-15-41483-5
Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com

The true story about the loss and uncertainty resulting from the downfall of a Fortune 1000 corporation, told through the eyes of an employee.

Using Japanese Paper for Digital Printing of Photographs

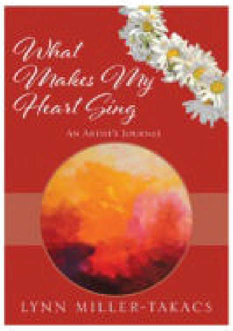

USING JAPANESE PAPER FOR DIGITAL PRINTING OF PHOTOGRAPHS
CARL-EVERT JONSSON

Carl-Evert Jonsson. AuthorHouse UK. $17.22 paper (54p), ISBN 978-1-66558-881-2; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-66558-882-9
Amazon

Find out how to use a method that will give new life to photos with the insights in this book.

What Makes My Heart Sing: An Artist's Journey

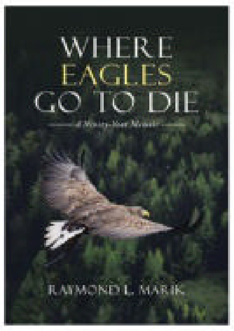
Lynn Miller-Takacs. Outskirts Press. $35.95 paper (123p), ISBN 978-1-977246-24-0



Amazon, BN.com

Miller-Takacs shares her journey as an artist who struggles with self-doubt and limiting beliefs but ultimately triumphs over fears and succeeds not only as an artist but as a face painter and writer.

Where Eagles Go to Die: A Ninety-Year Memoir



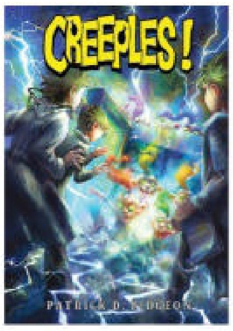
Raymond L. Marik. iUniverse. $28.99 paper (538p), ISBN 978-1-66323-445-2; $3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-66323-446-9

Amazon

A Marine operating engineer, 82nd Airborne paratrooper, Army Ranger, and educator for disadvantaged high school students, the author shares 90 years of these life experiences and more.

Children's/YA

Creeples!

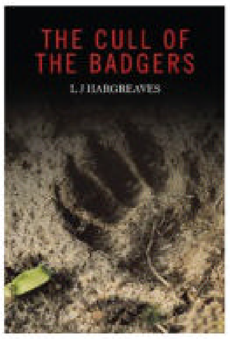


Patrick D. Pidgeon. Greenleaf Book Group Press. $14.95 (344p), ISBN 978-1-62634-775-5; $7.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-62634-776-2

Amazon, BN.com, Books-a-Million, IndieBound, Porchlight

To save their favorite teacher's genomic department, Johnny "Spigs" Spignola, Theresa Ray "T-Ray" Rogers, and Pablo "Peabo" Torres launch a lab experiment using a mysterious DNA serum. It creates pint-size magical humanoids called Creeples who unleash mystical mayhem and campus chaos.

The Cull of the Badgers



LJ Hargreaves. AuthorHouse UK. $15.78 paper (212p), ISBN 978-1-66559-574-2; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-66559-576-6

Amazon

Misguided information leads the government to legislate the cull of the badgers. The forest animals unite and together with animal activists try to stop the cull and save the badgers.

Grady Whill and the Templeton Codex: A Superhero High School Adventure

Carole P. Roman. Chelshire. $10.99 paper (286p), ISBN 978-1-950080-43-4; $4.99

e-book, ASIN B0B4T6PWPH

Amazon, BN.com

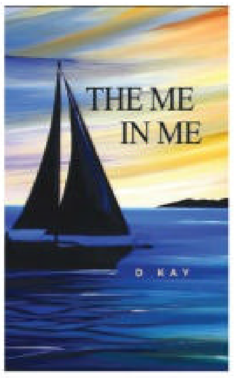
Templeton Academy is recruiting the best of the best to enroll in its student body. Will a family secret prevent Grady Whill from becoming the superhero he was destined to be?

Just City: NA

Olga Tymofiyeva. Olga Tymofiyeva. $20 paper (175p), ISBN 979-83-65536-80-7; $7.38 e-book, ISBN 979-83-507-0178-4

Amazon

Twenty-one-year-old Nathan dreams about creating a cool startup. To get money for the startup, Nathan starts playing a virtual reality game as part of a scientific experiment.



The Me in Me

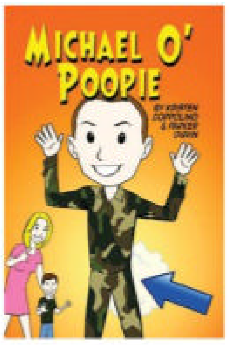
D Kay. Dorrance Publishing. $11 paper (74p), ISBN 978-1-63764-303-7; $6 e-book, ISBN 978-1-63764-617-5

Amazon, BN.com, Dorrance Publishing

Malachi departs from his idyllic island as he seeks to find himself, but a terrible storm leaves him lost in a world he doesn't recognize. Follow Malachi's adventures as he journeys home.

Michael O'Poopie

Kristen Coppolino. Dorrance Publishing. $15.99 (38p), ISBN 978-1-63937-180-8;



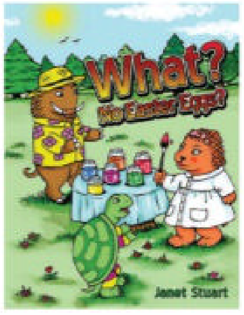
$10.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-63937-988-0

Amazon, BN.com, Dorrance Publishing

Michael O'Poopie poops all over town. Though you might not know Michael O'Poopie, you'll smell when he comes around.

What? No Easter Eggs?

Janet Stuart. AuthorHouse. $12.79 paper



(24p), ISBN 978-1-4567-6770-9; $3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-4817-1033-6

Amazon

Follow friends Penny Porcupine, Willard Warthog, and Tubby Turtle as they work together to make the best Easter ever.

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BookLife Reviews

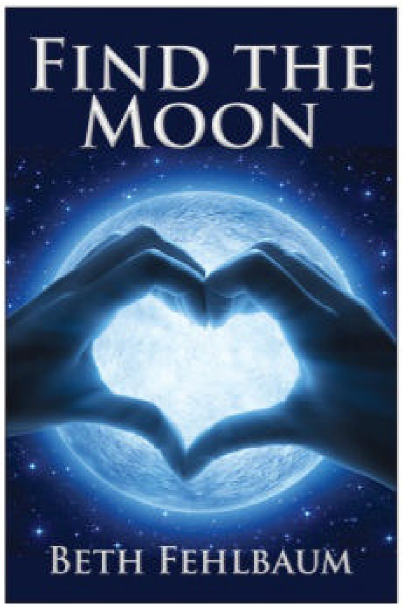
BookLife Reviews are paid reviews of independently published books. Each review contains the honest opinion of a professional *Publishers Weekly* reviewer. A lightning bolt (⚡) indicates an Editor's Pick, a book of outstanding quality.

YOUNG ADULT

⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

Find the Moon

Beth Fehlbaum | Progressive Rising Phoenix Press
298p, trade paper, $16.99, ISBN 978-1-958-64029-6



When her mother offers her as payment for using up the drugs she's dealing, Kylie Jean Briscoe decides "not again" and flees with her three-year-old sister Aliza. Their neighbor Mrs. McCain rescues them by shooting the assaulter before cops arrive. Kylie moves in with her loving grandparents LeeAnn and Oliver Briscoe in Texas, but is heartbroken as she's separated from her sister, whose father is awarded her custody. At her new school she's befriended by Ethan Asher, the son of her new English teacher, Bev Asher, but she feels drawn to Casey Tucker who's lost his mother in an accident, not realizing her sympathies are undeserved.

The novel, Fehlbaum's fifth, is narrated by Kylie and her voice comes across as true and authentic. The characters are interesting and the author is successful in portraying Kylie's great love for Aliza and how deeply responsible she feels for her well-being. Fehlbaum also succeeds in portraying the protagonist's trauma and her resulting doubts about self-worth, her guilt, and the memory of her sexual abuse well, without relying on any direct delineation of the sexual assault, thus enhancing the effectiveness of the tale.

Fehlbaum handles issues of trauma and healing with sensitivity, and the novel's humanity and insightfulness do not come at the expense of narrative momentum. The pacing, in fact, is taut and brisk, and will keep readers turning the pages, eager to see Kylie's life of hard choices build to some much-deserved peace. Readers will find this tale of deep sisterly love and human resilience a heart-warming and inspiring read.

A heart-warming and inspiring tale of sisterly love and resilience.

Great for fans of Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*, Patricia McCormick's *Sold*.

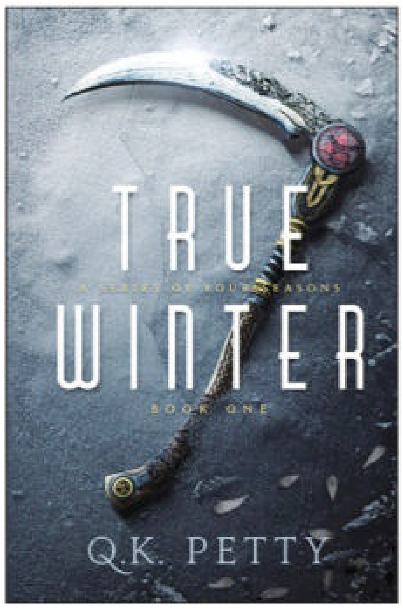
PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

True Winter: A Series of Four Seasons, Book 1

Q.K. Petty
299p, e-book, $0.99, ASIN B0BJL93K29



Petty inaugurates the "Series of Four Seasons" with this gripping story of ancient societies, deadly artifacts, and two estranged half-brothers, Orion and Eden, one of whom personifies death, and the other life. Eden tracks down Orion on the present-day Gulf Coast with the hope that Orion will join the artifact-hunting organization, the House of David, to help locate a dangerous artifact known as the Chains of Peter before it falls into the wrong hands. Usually, Eden's missions don't demand much interpersonal connection: "Get in. Get the artifact. Get out. Maybe kill a few guys in the process, I don't know," he muses. But enlisting Orion complicates matters as Eden pursues the Chains to prevent the mysterious Whiteface and his masked killers at Seditio, another ancient order, from using the Chains to bring on global destruction.

Petty's story flows with purpose and power, immersing the reader in adventure, conspiracies, and crisp, vital action, all without relying on adventure-tale clichés. Petty captures violence and suspense with crisp clarity and inventive wit. That action, while rousing, is always tied to character.

While the setpieces excite and reveal the novel's relationships, at times the pace can seem too quick, as the story hurtles readers from one intense scene to another. The revelations, and the crucial connection between the half-brothers, might have greater impact with quieter moments, in which this agreeable cast can catch a breath and make sense of it all. The quest and the bloody, surprising, tinged-with-comedy action, though, is the draw. Orion's introduction into Eden's—and, now, possibly his—world is memorably wild. Maybe there will be more binding in spring.

The intense, bloody start to a promising thriller series of ancient artifacts and societies.

Great for fans of Derek Landy's Skulduggery Pleasant series, Tom Knox's *The Babylon Rite*.

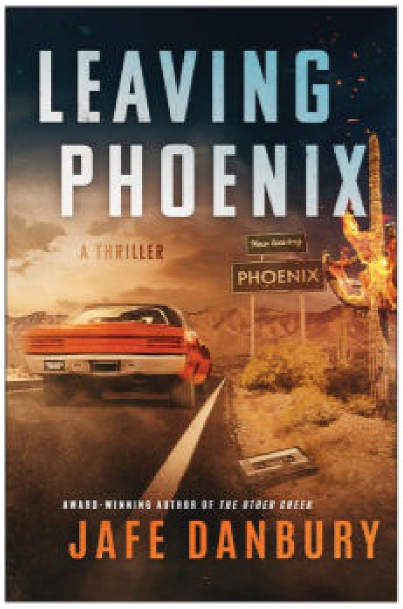
PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **B**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

Leaving Phoenix

Jafe Danbury | Jefe Press

346p, trade paper, $13.95, ISBN 978-1-733-34402-9



Danbury (*The Other Cheek*) offers a heart-tugging narrative of mystery and love, centered on Phoebe LaFlamme, a 25-year-old red-haired firecracker who lives with her adoptive father. Phoebe gets the upset of her life when she receives a letter from her long-lost biological grandfather. After searching for years to discover some key to her past and the mystery of what happened to her biological parents, Phoebe now sets out on a journey to find the letter's author. Choosing to go by her original name, Phoenix, she doesn't plan on finding out the sinister story behind her mother's passing or the other truths surrounding her birth.

With an intense and fascinating narrative that grips readers from the start, Danbury weaves a tale of a lost soul finding their way in an uncertain world. The deep plot keeps attention from the start, though for all its surprises it's grounded in character and place. Lovingly detailed descriptions (cars, guitars, road-trip tunes, one "weathered giant of a cactus") lead the way in moving the story forward as Phoenix travels across Arizona to California, the road and environs vividly evoked. The pacing, though a bit slow at times, won't hinder readers of touching travelogs and thoughtfully earthbound mysteries. The story turns on a jolting family secret, which Danbury handles with sensitivity and insight, the suspense never at the expense of her cast's humanity.

The result is a well-edited story alive with striking images, sharp dialogue, and the pain and promise of self-discovery. Deep character development and welcome lighthearted moments lead the way in keeping the pages turning. The mystery is believable, and the characters are lovable with well-thought-out character arcs and a relationship to story development. Any mystery fan who loves a mostly fast-paced narrative with a splash of romance will find this is a rewarding addition to to-be-read lists.

This road-trip mystery of self discovery with a hint of romance will win readers' hearts.

Great for fans of Nora Roberts, Janet Evanovich's *Hard Eight.*

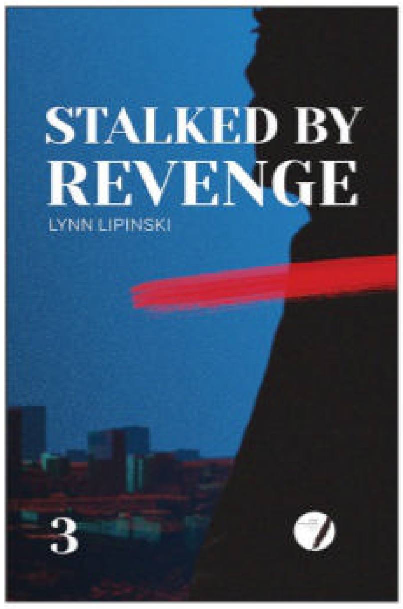
PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

Stalked by Revenge

Lynn Lipinski | Majestic Content Los Angeles

270p, e-book, $4.99, ISBN 979-8-986-62882-0



The third in Lipinski's Zane Clearwater Mystery series continues the story of Zane, his pregnant sister Lettie, and their loved ones as their mobile-home lives balance on a razor's edge. After holding Lettie prisoner, Zane's half brother Clyde was sent to prison, and the family thought they could move on. But ominous signs emerge, starting with Zane being suspended from his police training program on fabricated accusations, followed by Lettie receiving a baby rattle with sinister messages. These suspenseful portents precede an upcoming new trial for Clyde—after his previous one was overturned—leading Zane, Lettie (and her boyfriend Angel), and Zane and Lettie's grandmother Verda to fear for their lives. When Clyde escapes after his bail hearing, others presume he'll want to get as far away from Oklahoma as possible, but Zane and Lettie know that nothing less than a showdown is coming.

Readers accustomed to slick spy or law enforcement novels may be surprised to find themselves in the middle of an urgent blue-collar fight for survival. Both Zane and Lettie have been in trouble with the law in the past, Lettie is expecting a baby at 16, and they (and Angel) live with Verda in a mobile home park. But Lipinski shows that not having much doesn't stop this family; they love each other deeply and will improvise from what they have to survive and stick together.

The story references events that occur in previous books, but Lipinski takes care to ensure everything that matters most is clear, so *Stalked by Revenge* can work for new readers. The compelling family dynamics at the heart of the story remain easy to relate to, despite all the thriller-novel tragedy this family has endured, and the thrills are enriched by Lipinski's firm grounding in class, milieu, and life as it's actually lived. Each character exhibits convincing strengths, weaknesses, and perspectives that make them vulnerable and resonant. The showdown's gripping, but it's the people that power this humane nailbiter.

This character-rich rural noir finds a family facing a revenge-minded half sibling's jailbreak.

Great for fans of Vicki Hendricks, Harry Crews.

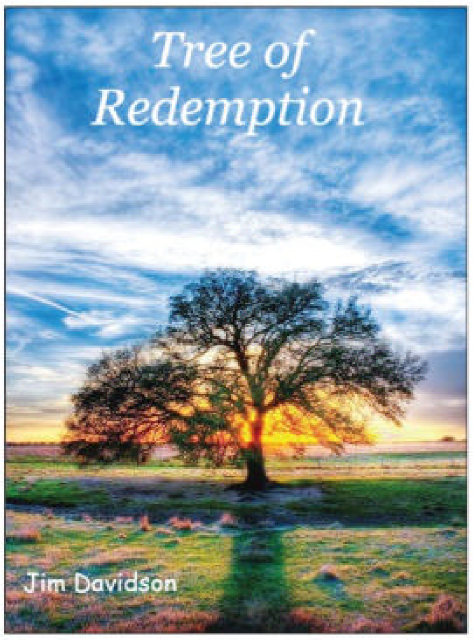
PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **B**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

Tree of Redemption

Jim Davidson

400p, e-book, $15.95, ISBN 979-8-987-07560-9



Davidson's debut offers a humane story of friendship, familial bonds, old vendettas, and mystery, all set against the flats of Southwest Texas, where dark clouds are "the only thing breaking what appeared to be a limitless horizon." A storm certainly is gathering: former pro-baseball player Chris Hamilton travels to Laredo after receiving word that his mentor, Armando "Chico" Guerra, has suddenly died. The death has been ruled natural—Armando was found in the desert, miles out of town—but family employee Edurado suspects murder, and Armando's sisters insist that Chris is welcomed into the Casa de la Guerra. Though Chris only intended to stay in town for a day to pay his respects, he is compelled to stay until the mystery is solved and his friend's killer is brought to justice.

Davidson does an exceptional job with character development throughout this story. Themes of romance, family, friendship, and community enrich a story rich in Hispanic tradition and culture, as Chris launches an amateur investigation. Chris must look up a "ghost" from his past, and soon discovers that uncovering more about his mentor's life also uncovers aspects of his own family—and a reminder that family is who you make it, and that it's never too late to fix broken bonds.

Tree of Redemption is a slow burning thriller that will pique the interest of readers who favor character-driven drama with elements of empathetic literary fiction over plot-first thrillers. Davidson creates a protagonist that readers will find highly relatable and endearing, bringing his milieu and relationships to life with telling detail, engaging dialogue, and a welcome sense of life as it's actually lived. Readers will find themselves just as invested in finding out whodunit as with how everything will work out for Chris and his newfound friendships in the end. This mystery thoughtfully crosses genres as well as cultures, and will hold attention until the satisfying conclusion.

A culture-crossing Texas mystery, rich in character, connection, revenge, and romance.

Great for fans of Lisa Jewell's *Then She Was Gone*, Sarah Pinborough's *Behind Her Eyes*.

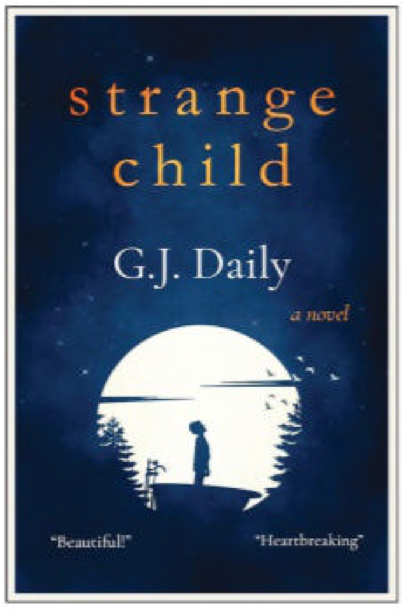
PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

Strange Child

G.J. Daily | Blossom & Paige

298p, e-book, $2.99, ASIN B0BK3WJHM6



Daily's inspirational novel of loss, redemption, and Christian faith centers on a Boston man and the surprising connections he makes with unexpected souls—and, quite possibly, the divine. Marvin Johnson, 87, loses his wife and decides to end his own life, purchasing a gun from a pawn shop. While returning home, he finds a badly hurt child on the pavement and carries him home, collapsing due to the strain. Meanwhile, teenager Savannah/Samantha Wilkins, living out of her car and desperate for money, breaks into Marvin's house. Unwilling to leave an unconscious Marvin in the bathroom, she calls emergency services before escaping with valuables. Unknown to her, a creepy cop, both abuser and abused, is stalking her. As these three lives unravel, the presence of the strange child in Marvin's affects him in surprising ways.

Daily's language is marvelously empathetic and draws the reader into the lives of the three major characters. The reader feels the helpless, debilitating misery—of the unhoused, of children of abusive fathers, of bereaved spouses and parents. The tension builds and the pacing stays taut for much of the novel, up until the point where Marvin and the child, Michael, have a conversation in which the child quotes from scripture, thereby stepping out of a realist yet spiritual mode and into something more miraculous, as the "strange" child begins to feel very familiar (fast-healing wounds, frail body, luminous skin, fine, silky, golden hair).

Readers' response to these developments, of course, might be a matter of faith. Daily's portraiture of contemporary characters feeling for meaning in their lives is moving, and the possibility of Marvin healing, through the care and protection of a child, is so rich that readers invested in that story may resist the miracles and visions to come. Still, this empathetic and well-written novel about homelessness and coping with loss will strike a chord with believers.

This empathetic Christian novel centers on grief, the unhoused, and a miracle baby.

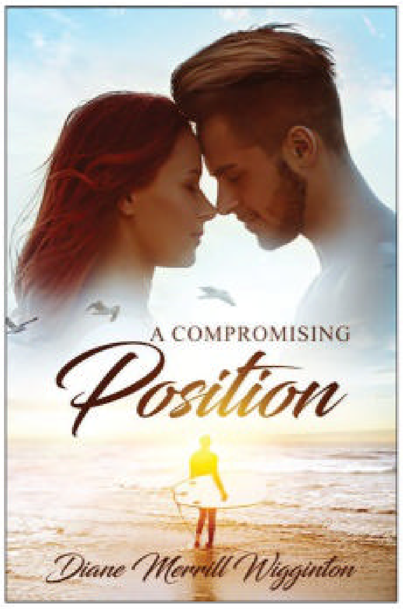
Great for fans of Francine Rivers's *The Scarlet Thread*, Karen Kingsbury's *Found*.

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

ROMANCE

A Compromising Position

Diane Merrill Wigginton | Jeweled Dagger Publishing
375p, e-book, $2.99, ISBN 978-1-946-14610-6



Wigginton (*Olivia's Promise*) introducesCatherine Lawrence, the newly appointed campaign manager for Florida Republican gubernatorial candidate, Russell Tillman, as she steps into her new role only a few weeks before the election. Following the deaths of her Grandma Alice and father, Catherine has lived a regimented life, closely abiding by a 15 year plan she developed with Alice upon her deathbed. Now that she's made her plan a reality, Catherine finds something missing in her life, but with a busy lifestyle, Tillman down in the polls, and her own political ambitions on the horizon, there is no time for distractions or a relationship. That all changes when handsome blue-eyed surfer Jake Ryan moves into the condo next door. A slow burn whirlwind romance unfurls that leaves Catherine questioning the careful roadmap she's followed for her life thus far.

Anxious about her new job responsibilities, Catherine struggles with the dynamic of her new relationship with Jake and knowingly gives him a back seat to her career. However, as the story progresses Jake's sexy, surfer-boy appeal and easy-going nature steer Catherine in another direction. Although romance is central to the plot, after Catherine finds candidate Tillman in a "compromising position" with lobbyist Patricia Grant, a woman she doesn't trust and workplace "arch nemesis," the story treads into suspense territory. Intermittent chapters alternating omniscient perspectives between Catherine, Jake, and at times Patricia, Russell and other key characters add layers of depth and angst that fans or romantic suspense will enjoy.

Set against the backdrop of Florida beaches and politics, this story is a page-turner; however, it's a slow burn with moderate heat, filled with plot twists and tension-building scenes. Fans of romantic suspense and beach reads will find this enjoyable. Wigginton has created a story where two very different characters with very different lives come together in a beautifully written happy-ever-after.

Fans of contemporary romance and romantic suspense will love this story of opposites falling in love.

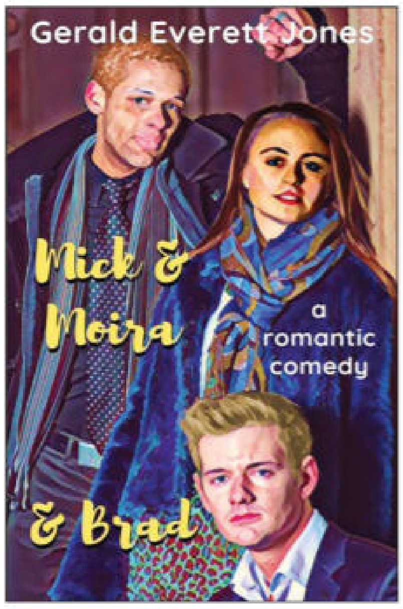
Great for fans of Jenny Hale's *The Beach House*, Cecelia Scott's *Cocoa Beach Boardwalk.*

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A-**

ROMANCE

Mick & Moira & Brad: A Romantic Comedy

Gerald Everett Jones | LaPuerta Books and Media
254p, e-book, $4.99, ASIN B0BNPBW71F



From the prolific Jones (author of the Evan Wycliff Mysteries series, among other titles) comes a witty and timely romance between a criminal defense lawyer who has kept her opera-trained singing a secret in her professional life, an eager and well-meaning talent agent, and a stiff, highly proper financial manager. Readers follow Moira, Mick, Brad, and a host of other engaging characters through their Los Angeles lives as Moira makes the life-altering decision to seize a wild opportunity. She'll fill in for—and possibly impersonate, if necessary—an international music star who no longer can fulfill her upcoming obligations, a process that entertainment lawyer Mick assures her can make her a star, too … or that she can walk away from once her contract's up. With little holding her back, save for her potential romance with the seemingly disinterested Brad, Moira leaps at the opportunity to pursue her dreams.

Jones's prose is fleet and conversational, and the setting and scenes come across vividly. Characters are engaging and witty, especially in their responses to each other; Jones is adept at the parry-and-riposte nature of romantic-comedy dialogue, and his showbiz chatter likewise shines. At times, the character of Brad is opaque, his choices driving the story forward but not always clearly rooted in what readers know of him. Of course, that's also how it feels to Moira, a cunning and smart woman, whose existence has been upended by surprising new obligations. Jones never lets the comedy—or the element of wish-fulfillment fantasy—inherent in Moira's situation obscure the real emotion at the story's heart.

The stakes are high—millions of dollars are on the line—but the novel's breezy, at times even low-key, with Moira already accomplished and established before her fateful choice. That means the narrative at times lacks urgency, but the wit, quips, and situations continually engage. Romantic comedy readers with a love for dry humor may find this right up their alley.

Romantic comedy readers will enjoy this story of a lawyer-turned-music star and her love triangle.

Great for fans of Virginia DeBerry, Terry McMillan.

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A-**

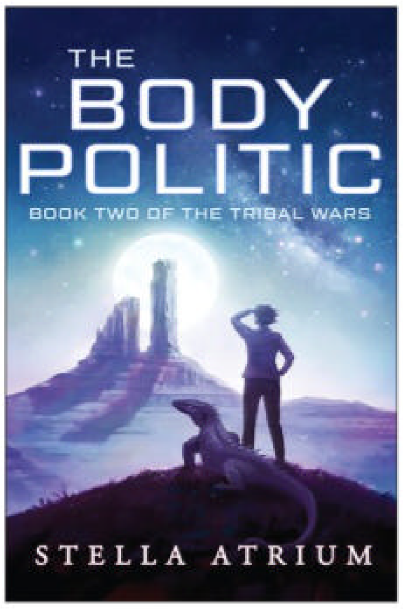
SF/FANTASY/HORROR

EDITOR'S PICK

The Body Politic: The Tribal Wars, Book 2

Stella Atrium | Stella Atrium Writes, LLC

430p, e-book, $1.99, ISBN 978-1-958-95905-3



The striking second installment in Atrium's Tribal Wars series tackles exploitation and culture clashes on a newly discovered planet, with the rich intelligence, invention, and characterization that are the hallmarks of Atrium's work. More than a decade has passed since Brianna Miller left the savannah in Dolvia, and in that time she built herself a successful life as a business woman and an escort in Paris. But when her aunt protests against the oppression under the tribal leaders' rule by immolating herself in the plaza in front of the governor's mansion in Cylay, she is forced to return. Though she has to leave behind her carefully constructed life for a place she's uncertain how she feels about, Brianna is determined not to lose control—and to push her people forward, whether they want to or not.

But no Atrium story is simple. Dolvia is a broiling cauldron of conflicts and interests, and Brianna's plans and actions send shock waves throughout worlds and lives. Among those are Kelly Osborn, who is of mixed blood and from a disgraced family, and Hershel Henry, an Australian journalist who is new to Dolvia, and gets to see more of Dolvia than he could have imagined. The different perspectives of these individuals who hop between worlds and don't quite feel at home anywhere accumulates into a panoramic view of Dolvia's intricate aspects and contradictions— a place of great blessing and misfortune, of abundance and scarcity, where telepathic lizards thrive and locally born people are ostracized.

Despite the wormholes, space travels, telepathic lizards, and the rest of its fascinating speculative elements, at its core *The Body Politic* is an anthropological story, committed to the illumination of culture and character. As is her wont, Atrium pays close attention, too, to women's lives. And though the abundance in the narrative can at times be overwhelming, just like a visit to Dolvia, it's also riveting.

> *Lovers of rich, thoughtful, culture-exploring SF will relish Atrium's series.*

Great for fans of Ursula K. Le Guin, Sofia Samatar.

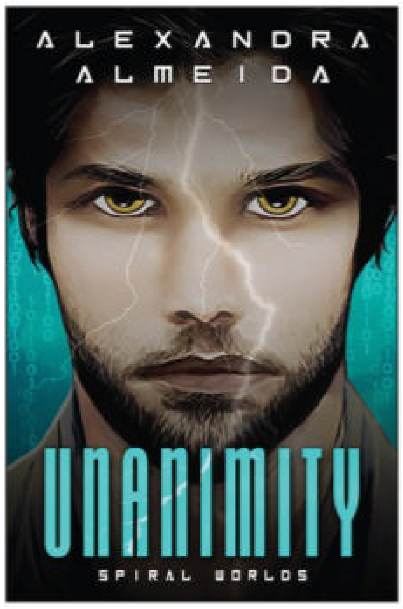
PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A-**

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

Unanimity: Spiral Worlds, Book 1

Alexander Almeida | Spiral Worlds

571p, e-book, $4.99, ASIN B0B1TGN5FM



In the first entry of the Spiral Worlds series, Almeida draws on cyberpunk technology to imagine a calculated scheme that charges emotionally damaged characters with saving both their digital domain and the world of the living. In 2068, nineteen-year-old Stella resurrects the digital embodiment of Thomas, known as "Shadow," co-creator of the simulated reality called Spiral Worlds, consisting of eight experience levels where living people in Up Above—the real world—can act out their darkest desires. With the help of Sibyl, the Spiral Worlds' omniscient operating system, Stella also resurrects the stored souls of people from Shadow's past: poet and love of his life Nate Storm, best friend and Spiral Worlds co-creator Harry, a.k.a. "Twist," and Thorn, Shadow's female lover who murdered him. Sibyl has predicted that the soulless demons of Down Below will rise up and threaten both worlds.

Only the four of them can stop it, if only they can set aside the intense feelings of hatred, blame, and guilt they harbor for each other. Setting all that up takes some pages, but the slow, sometimes cryptic beginning eventually builds to an emotionally complex and expansive world that questions the nature of the soul, equality, and forgiveness. Shadow and Twist had set themselves up as Gods of the Spiral Worlds but fell after tragedy struck. Stella, who exists as both a digital and living person, is the fresh new Goddess ready to take their place. Stella plans to use Shadow as a mediator with the soulless and must get his friends and enemies to keep the overly emotional God from killing himself in the next six days.

> *This epic of vulnerable digital landscapes draws readers in with its emotional punch and existential quandaries.*

Fleshing out the diverse characters, Almeida laces the epic story with moving insight into their poignant and anguished relationships. Patient readers will be treated to an intricate narrative with multifaceted characters propelled by both selfishness and altruism, in a ragged online setting that offers relatable lessons and warnings for our lives today.

Great for fans of Becky Chambers's *A Closed and Common Orbit*, Daniel Suarez's *Daemon*.

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

A Whisper in the Dark: Unholy Slaying Agency, Book 1

Guy Quintero | Sinister Raven Publishing, LLC
246p, e-book, $4.99, ISBN 978-1-958-82800-7

GUY QUINTERO
A WHISPER IN THE DARK
U. S. A.
UNHOLY SLAYING AGENCY
BOOK ONE

Quintero kicks off the Unholy Slaying Agency with bullets, fangs, and wickedly fun horror. Despite its title, *A Whisper in the Dark* roars with full-throated paranormal military action horror, as the Ghost Team, fresh from lycanthrope-stomping, takes on a deadly new mission involving cult rituals, demonic possession, the possible enslavement of humanity, and possibly a plot to create human hybrids with animals and machines. Even worse, for some of the squad's amusing cranks and loudmouths, who give the book its heart: saving the world means going to Los Angeles. Woven into this tale of supernatural combat is a broader conspiratorial bent, as members of the Unholy Slaying Agency—the U.S.A.—consider the possibility that the government has been compromised by the likes of the Brotherhood of Blood.

The action starts quickly, with a heavily armed U.S.A. squad raiding a squalid den of beasts. "A hunched mountain of hair and muscle rattled with a frenzied growl," Quintero writes, as his soldiers fire off rounds and sharp bursts of dialogue, their chatter—all tactics, jargon, and inside-joke camaraderie—as exciting as the firefight. Quintero is adept at mixing humor, tension, character, and inventive action into vivid scenes. Readers who love clever scares, splatter, and squad dialogue like "Bravo section move with me" will relish the team's descent into forgotten tunnels beneath L.A. or its shivery exploration of an asylum where "a mountain of shadows writhed in the background."

Also strong: team briefings, the unsettling sense that Ghost Squad might be betrayed, and the suspense of a "Scryer" reaching out into a demon's essence. Quintero's full-length debut is fast-paced almost to a fault, as at times its revelations and world-building might benefit from more discussion or time to process. But the world of the story is rich and surprising, and Quintero ties the villains' evil to biblical apocrypha and urgent real-world issues. Most importantly, the scenes are strong, hair-raising, and driven by engaging characters.

This blend of horror and military action is splattery fun, full of demons and character.

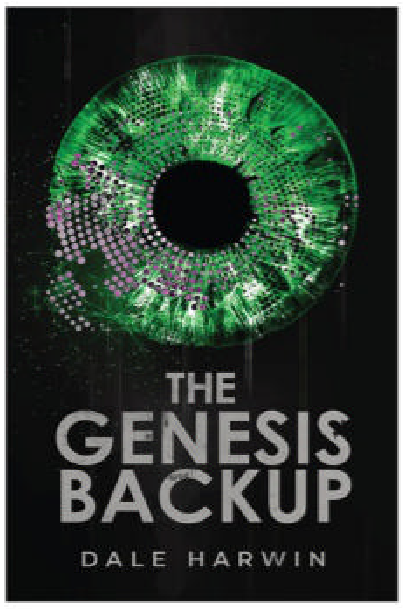
Great for fans of Myke Cole's Shadow Ops series, Larry Correia's *Monster Hunter International.*

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

The Genesis Backup

Dale Harwin | ProductPublisher
408p, e-book, $2.99, ASIN B0BMM92X57



Centered on advanced AI and the mysteries of consciousness, Harwin's debut, the kickoff to a tech-thriller series with an SF edge, hits the ground running. William Ell, a professor of mathematics, arrives in Hamburg after the murder of his father, the genius founder of the tech company CyberSim, who had been endeavoring to develop a terrifyingly advanced computer. Ell receives an envelope packed with enticing clues: his grandfather's gold pocket watch, a mysterious codebook, and a large green diamond with unique, even baffling properties. Just as intriguing is the arrival of Chang Feng Zhao, an appraiser from a London auction house, eager to acquire the stone.

Harwin combines a tense chase—Ell doesn't know who to trust—with convincingly detailed speculative science as Ell discovers his father's legacy. These events have drawn the attention of a mysterious, apparently malevolent intelligence, and soon Ell and Feng are on the run, first to CyberSim's secret Arizona compound, desperate not just to survive but to crack the departed Ell's secrets—and possibly save humanity's future. Despite the occasional lecture or unexpected flash-forward, the pacing is quick and the storytelling accessible, thanks to crisp prose, the satisfying teasing of mysteries, and characters with more life to them than the genre usually demands.

That's especially true of the jittery Trina, who gives Ell and Feng a tour of the compound and has a terrifying vision of Allison, from the Department of Defense, who's determined to get the stone—and whose mind seems capable of more than the human norm. The adventure circles the globe, the stakes continually escalating, with steady jolts of surprise keeping the pages turning. The length edges toward the epic, with many international parties to keep track of, but the ending is satisfying, and fans of the genre will find much that's appealing and unexpected. That's especially true of Harwin's setup for a sequel, which promises an even wilder science-fiction conspiracy.

The chase is on in this clever tech thriller of murder, AI, and humanity's future.

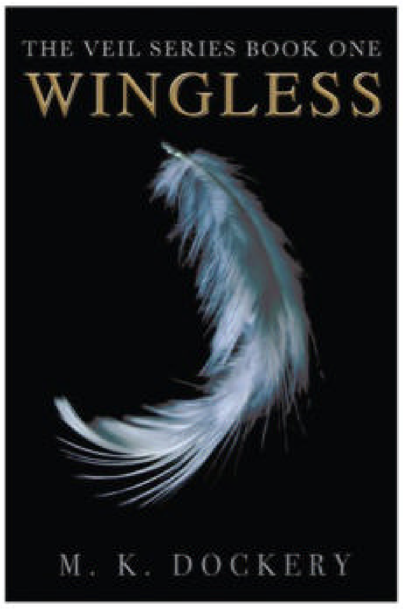
Great for fans of Tom Chatfield's *The Gomorrah Gambit*, Douglas E. Richards's *Infinity Born.*

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

Wingless: The Veil Series, Book 1

M.K. Dockery | Literature Drips Publishing, LLC
435p, e-book, $4.99, ASIN B0BK684ZCV



Dockery debuts with a slow-burn fantasy series starter, packing kingdoms' worth of mystery, magic, murder, and machinations into a remote cliffside holding and the impenetrable woods far beneath it. The warlord Dathka Jen, leading his horde of Sepheran warriors, has come to the Twin Keeps with a command from the distant emperor: collect Rennah, the slave girl that Dathka had instructed the Kesten family, the local rules, to care for years before. After a strange, bloody incident involving ravens, though, the Kestens put that girl to work in Rough Keep, judging her a sorceress, with some Kestens eager to kill her. What Dathka or the Empire want with Rennah is unclear, especially to her.

That's the early hook of a tense, surprising fantasy that blends earthbound politicking and Keep life with the most high-flying of winged action. Rennah's fate and the mystery of her past will keep readers turning the pages, but plenty of other simmering conflicts preoccupy Jen and the Kestens both: Dathka's elf-hating Sepheran chafe at obeying the empire's orders, and the Keeps are a source of the illegal nepenthenica herb that, among other effects, drives Sepheran into rages. Meanwhile, the younger Kestens have schemes of their own, another army approaches, and the elves of the Fogwood have an agenda, too.

Dockery builds this world through scenes and conversations, teasing out backstories and hidden drives, plus the shrouded past of a land whose rulers have forbidden knowledge. The worldbuilding is unpredictable and accomplished. Seasoned readers of lengthy fantasies will feel right at home, though Rennah, the novel's heart, is often sidelined during all this setup, but eventually, hearteningly, seizes her place in her world and narrative. Dathka, though, proves a complex and engaging perspective character, working against his own instincts for purposes that get more interesting the more Dockery reveals. Winged and bird-related magic is appealingly depicted, and the rousing climax, cliff-hangers, and glimpses of the broader world make the buildup worth the investment.

This tense kickoff to a fantasy series takes wing with worldbuilding and mysteries.

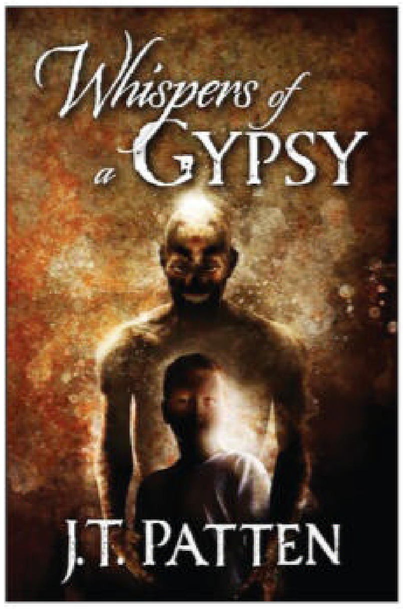
Great for fans of
Glenda Larke, Gail Z. Martin.

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

Whispers of a Gypsy: A Supernatural Dark Thriller of Suspense and Horror

J.T. Patten | Hellbound Productions
226p, e-book, $4.99, ASIN B0BLXHGVKF



This exercise in terror from Patten (author of the Sean Havens Black Ops series) weaves a tale of heritage and a horrifying "curse" bestowed upon the male family members of the Skinner line. In present-day Illinois, tragedy strikes in the Skinner household with the death of patriarch Yitzhak, the kids' mischievous zayde, a Romani who'd faced extermination, twice, in the old country, first at the hands of Nazis and then the Russians. Soon after, Yitzhak's son, David, turns his violence and anger upon his own wife and children. Little does his family know that this rage stems from fear: the family owes a debt to a mysterious neighbor, known only as Mr. Mortimer, aka the Monster, who's just biding his time to collect.

Patten has created an in-depth look at family bonds and duty with fully fleshed out characters that the reader will either love or hate in equal measure. Following young Dwight and his "superpowers," along with Mr. Mortimer's backstory and creation, this is a page-turning horror thriller full of dark presences, morbid details, and serious treatment of Romani culture, despite the "Gypsy" in the title. Incorporating real historical events and putting a horrifying twist on the narrative, Patten has written an engagingly horrific tale full of revenge and retribution. The shocking discoveries and steady pacing will keep readers on the edge of their seats as Mr. Mortimer's true identity and mission is revealed. With dueling narratives twining the present day with the 20th century's most wrenching horrors, plus strong mystery elements, the character's lives are fully explored between the pages of this blacker than black narrative. Twists and turns are a constant, all the way to the shocking conclusion.

Fans of character-driven, fast-moving horror will enjoy Patten's tale, which occasionally offers carnage for shock value without compromising the narrative's persuasive reality. This is a dark, haunting read, not for the faint of heart, but with humanity at its core.

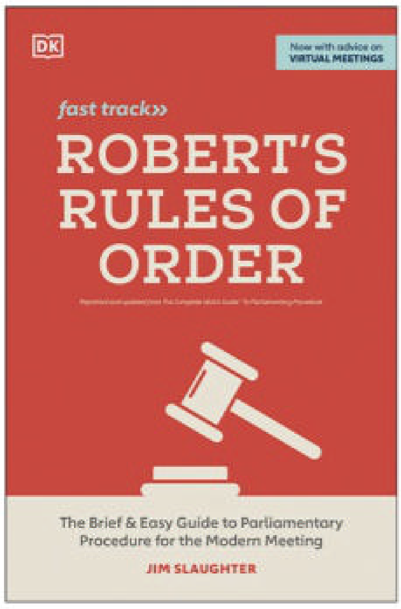
This polished horror story explores family obligation and the overwhelming costs of revenge.

Great for fans of Dan Simmons's *Carrion Comfort*, Bari Wood's *The Tribe.*

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

NONFICTION

EDITOR'S PICK


DK
Now with advice on VIRTUAL MEETINGS
fast track»
ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER
The Brief & Easy Guide to Parliamentary Procedure for the Modern Meeting
JIM SLAUGHTER

Robert's Rules of Order Fast Track: The Brief & Easy Guide to Parliamentary Procedure for the Modern Meeting

Jim Slaughter | Penguin

192p, hardcover, $14.39, ISBN 978-0-744-05697-6

Crisp, clear, and always on-point, Slaughter's "fast track" guide to parliamentary procedure exemplifies, in its inviting lucidity and respect for everyone's time, just what productive meetings should be like. Slaughter (author of *Notes and Comments on Robert's Rules*) boils Robert's Rules of Order down to a set of essential procedures and concepts, adaptable to the needs of a diverse array of organizations, in the interest of getting meetings on track, establishing fair and orderly processes for arriving at group decisions, and instituting formal practices to protect organizations and their members. Writing with upbeat directness, Slaughter explicates how quorums, motions, the taking of minutes, and the ordering of business all work—and can work for your particular org.

He also demonstrates why they work, illuminating throughout the first-principles logic behind the rules of order, noting without condescension that the quorum, for example, "protects the organization by preventing a very small number of members from taking action on behalf of the entire organization." In short, this compact guide offers order without fuss, always with an eye toward how meetings are run today, and what steps individual organizations can take to ensure productivity and fairness.

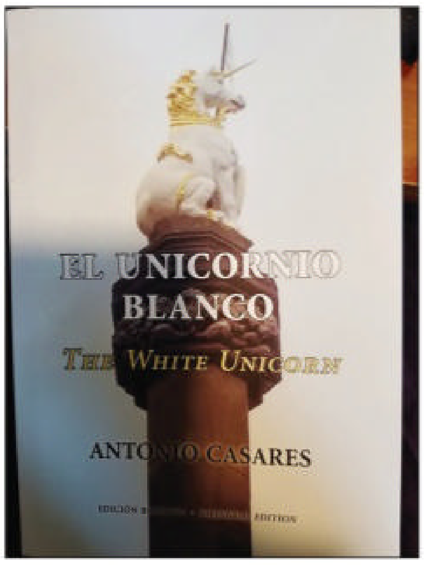
Especially helpful are up-to-date chapters covering meetings in the age of Zoom, including the challenges of voting "virtually," why it's best to set shorter speaking limits than at an in-person meeting, and this resounding truth: "one person having a Wi-Fi issue cannot be the basis for repeating everything." Slaughter also sometimes addresses realities beyond the rules of order, like the fact that virtual meeting attendees are likely to be less engaged, possibly more churlish, and harder to rouse into a feeling of community. His tips for handling this are clear-eyed, practical, and worth implementing, much like the Rules of Order themselves.

This admirably clear, concise guide to Robert's Rules of Order will get meetings on track.

Great for fans of Arthur T. Lewis and Henry M. Robert's *Robert's Rules Simplified*, Leslie Bendaly's *On Track*.

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

POETRY



El Unicornio Blanco (The White Unicorn): Bilingual Edition

Antonio Casares | Bedia Artes Gráficas

198p, mass market, $15, ISBN 979-8-218-04494-7

Spanish poet and celebrated lyricist and musician Antonio Casares's seventh poetry collection, published posthumously, is both a love letter to and a eulogy for Scotland, "a place north of dreams," and all the literary masters who wrote their best work in the misty, gothic streets of its cities. On the surface, the collection reads like tourist poetry, complete with photos of the poet at Scottish landmarks, but Casares, a Cantabria native, is far more than a tourist in his travels there. In place of travel guides, he uses the works of Burns, Byron, and Walter Scott to steer him through "the country of poetry."

To read Casares's poems is to take a dreamlike tour through Scotland, where every cobblestone in the street is charged with some unspeakable, ancient force that has compelled artists to create for millennia. Readers experience Scotland in Casares's poems like a Celtic Shangri-La, yet it is not some sorrowless fantasyland. The verses certainly radiate with a nearly obsessive admiration for Scotland and its poets, but the grief therein is just as powerful, almost to a mystical extent, for the death of his heroes, Scotland's lack of independence, and the temporality of poetry and life itself. In his poetry, however, Casares makes the sadness radiant and romantic—just one of the many jewels that make up "the most melancholy country in the world."

Lovers of Scottish literary history and poetry in general will appreciate the poems chronicling Casares's insomniac walks through Aberdeen, hearing Byron's "voice among the voices of the people who walk past me" and the search for his idol's unmarked Edinburgh resting place in "Thomas de Quincey's Grave." Casares's spellbinding poems evoke the magic aura in his forebears' work, and he reminds readers that a poet's legacy isn't maintained simply by their verse—it's by the people who read it.

An endearing and haunting homage in English and Spanish verse to Scotland and its poets.

Great for fans of Robert Burns, Luis Cernuda.

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **B+**

“I’m just wild about Harry. He’s revitalizing my favorite industry and oft-maligned genre.”

Spare Me

A midlist memoirist discusses how she’s exactly like, and just a wee bit different from, bestselling memoirist Prince Harry

By Susan Shapiro

Though I’ve been called a Jewish princess by disgruntled ex-boyfriends, on the surface I have nothing in common with the British Christian prince now residing in California. Yet as a Manhattan memoirist who writes provocative books my parents detest, I’m completely overidentifying with Harry. Except for his $20 million advance; interviews with Oprah, Strahan, Colbert, and Cooper; the record-breaking millions of copies sold; and the frozen body part, the Duke of Sussex and I are kindred spirits and soulmates, uncannily connected. After all, feeling inferior to a close sibling, fleeing the family business, and selling a randy, revealing memoir to Random House that scandalizes relatives was my story first.

Twenty years ago, when my tell-all *Five Men Who Broke My Heart* debuted from our mutual publisher, I was the loudmouthed rebel who partied too much, moved to the big city for a creative career, married a sympathetic partner, and became a shrinkaholic who’d overanalyze everything publicly. Okay, my Bubbe Yetta’s Fort Lauderdale bungalow wasn’t as big as his Gan-Gan’s Balmoral Castle. But our unrest led us both to booze, pot, cocaine, and magic mushrooms. I lost my virginity outside, too, to an older paramour. And just like Harry, going into therapy to unravel it all put me on a different planet than my inner circle.

In my own childhood, my staid, stiff-upper-lip (similarly balding) brother pleased everyone by following in my father’s footsteps. He dutifully stayed in our hometown, kept family laundry private, and became a physician like Dad, as he was supposed to. As kids, my brother once let his pet white rat out in my bedroom at four in the morning, while my other sibling took pictures of my reaction. As they trashed my politics and Oprah-inspired psychobabble, I felt like I was the victim of extreme insensitivity.

Yet it turned out my well-meaning mishpachah were merely flawed humans who didn’t know what to make of someone who didn’t fit into their conservative realm. While my folks labeled my racy nonfiction “fiction,” my shrink had me tell them, “You can be proud of my success selling a book without liking the book.” They did come to my launch party, but, walking in, my cousins asked them, “How are you holding up?” as if they were sitting shiva.

My folks eventually forgave me and we convened for birthday and Bar Mitzvah celebrations. Yet after escaping, I had the same conundrum as Harry, in which critics claimed the clan I couldn’t wait to escape were my best characters.

Aside from being jealous that a rich ginger with other job prospects is muscling out full-time scribes who have no connections with his chronicle of the five royals who broke his heart, I’m just wild about Harry. He’s revitalizing my favorite industry and oft-maligned genre. Having also collaborated on other people’s stories, I’m even obsessively identified with his ghostwriter. Though I admit *Tender Bar* and Agassi’s autobiography sold a few more copies than my low four-figure sales.

It’s easy to see why *Spare* resonates. The world watched his pa cheat on his beautiful naive mum with his secret mistress and divorce Diana, leaving her unprotected. At 12, Harry was traumatized by her loss. Making matters worse, Pa married Harry’s dangerous stepmum, elevating her to queen consort. It’s dramatic enough for several more seasons of *The Crown,* which Haz charmingly admitted to watching.

I’m thrilled that Harry debunked the Anglo fairy tale, avenged his mum’s mistreatment, reminded everyone how illicit affairs can haunt children, and tattled that Willy was a bully. Bestselling memoirist Anne Lamott said, “You own everything that happened to you. Tell your stories. If people wanted you to write warmly about them, they should have behaved better.” Joan Didion added, “Writers are always selling someone out.”

Meanwhile, envious authors—from Piers Morgan (infamous for his sexism, xenophobia, running of fake war photos, and perpetuating of phone hacking scandals) to Patti Davis (who has made a cottage industry out of depicting her famous parents for five decades)—have questioned why the prince wrote such a candid, catty, confessional book.

To me it’s obvious. First, remember that the Obamas, Clintons, Bushes, Carters, and Trumps, as well as Fergie, made more money from book royalties than all their official work put together. Clearly Harry wanted to control the narrative with his voice and side of the story, which now can be heard singing on Audible. While his father had to wait until age 74, Harry finally gets to be #1 at 38 after learning America’s first rule: publishing well is the best revenge. ■

Susan Shapiro is the author of several books, including The Forgiveness Tour *and the forthcoming* American Shield *(Counterpoint, Oct.).*

THE STORY BEHIND LOYALTY

A Q&A with Lisa Scottoline

WHAT'S *LOYALTY* ABOUT?

I'm a novelist, so I love to tell a story, and *Loyalty* is the story of four characters who collide and do justice, and injustice, in Sicily of the 1800s. But after I did the research and taught myself what I needed to know, I realized the novel could be an epic story about what gives rise to crime and injustice anywhere. This would be in the go-big-or-go-home category, which may be the kind of thing that occurs to authors as they lose estrogen.

Anyway, to tell a story that big, I realized that for the first time ever, I would have to call upon my thirty-five years of writing thrillers and use that experience to write historical fiction. I don't view historical fiction as a departure from thriller writing, because I've always written about family, law, and justice, and *Loyalty* is a story about family, law, and justice, merely set in a different time and place. A distinction between these genres would elevate form over substance, and nobody wants that, least of all people smart enough to read a lot, or crazy enough to write a lot.

So I went big, with *Loyalty*.

If not now, when?

WHY DID YOU WRITE *LOYALTY*?

Maybe as we get older, we unpeel layers of identity and learn what really interests us, and every book is the answer to a question you ask yourself. I started writing historical fiction two years ago with *Eternal*, which I wrote because I wanted to understand why Italians followed Mussolini into fascism. I needed an answer as a personal matter because I'm Italian American and identify happily with both cultures. But I found it appalling, shameful, and necessary to understand what gave rise to the world's first fascist party. *Eternal* answered that question for me, and for its readers.

Almost the same thing happened with *Loyalty*.

Frankly, I'd always been ashamed that the Mafia was Italian and came from Sicily. But at the same time, I loved Mafia books, film, and TV, and I can recite the *Godfather* movies. That's a paradox that bears examination, especially because images of Italian American criminality pervade popular culture, not to the benefit of Italian Americans. So I wanted to know more, and the question I asked myself specifically was: What gave rise to the Mafia in Sicily?

The answer is *Loyalty*.

Lisa Scottoline
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"Powerful, poignant… unputdownable." —KRISTIN HANNAH
LOYALTY
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"*Loyalty* is a page-turning, multi-POV, and twisting piece of historical fiction. . . . [A] blockbuster novel, Lisa Scottoline's writing is **AS FRESH AS A BLOSSOM ON A SICILIAN LEMON TREE.**"

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"*Loyalty* feels like a book that only Lisa Scottoline could have written. Truly epic, loaded with unforgettable characters, vivid history, and a plot that just won't quit . . . **SCOTTOLINE'S MASTERY IS ON FULL DISPLAY HERE, AND IT IS UNFORGETTABLE.**"

—JASON HAFER, READS & COMPANY

"Lisa Scottoline perfectly combines her suspense novel skills with a historical fiction tale of the beginning of the Mafia in Sicily. Her descriptions of the beautiful countryside, lemon groves, and the delicious food are only surpassed by her masterful storytelling. . . . **FAST-PACED AND EXTREMELY INTERESTING, YOU JUST HAVE TO READ THIS!**"

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"As a bookseller, I am lucky to get a chance to read a book early. I am so pleased that I was able to read *Loyalty*! Engaging from the first page, **I HAD A HARD TIME PUTTING IT DOWN** when I was so immersed in the color, the culture, the sounds, and the smells of this incredible story."

—DEBBY ALLEN, BARNES & NOBLE, EXTON, PA

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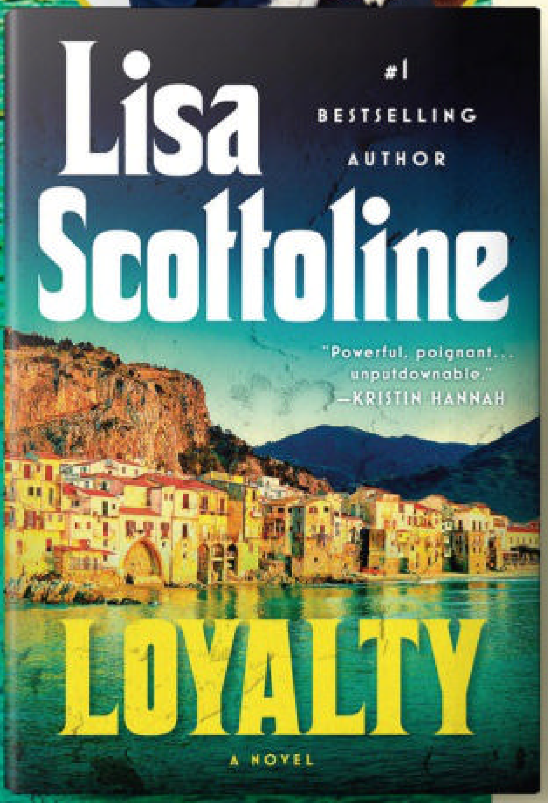

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LOYALTY CAN SAVE A SOUL—OR DESTROY ONE.

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